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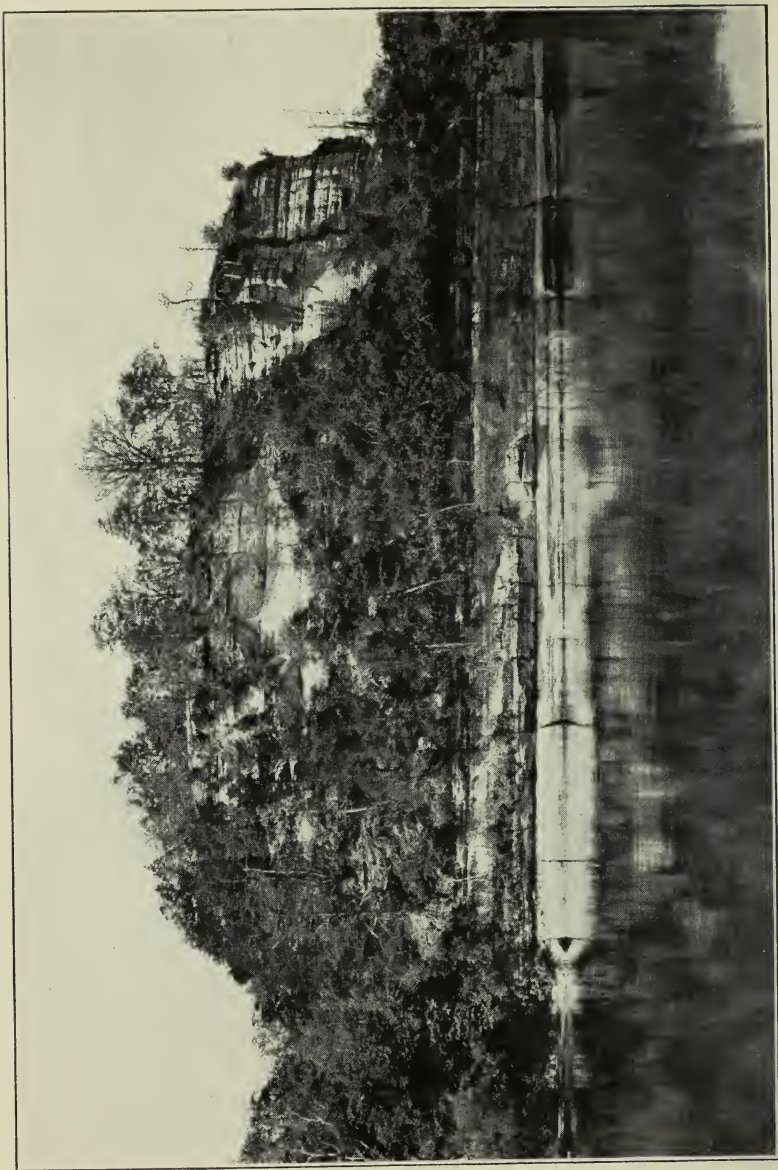


# THE LOST EMPIRE









STARVED ROCK SITE OF FORT ST. LOUIS, 1682

# The Lost Empire

*By*

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*Distributed by*

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## INTRODUCTION

"The Lost Empire" is a conglomerate, in which traditions, fancies, facts and tales of Starved Rock and other points related to it during the period of French occupancy are preserved in the form of blank verse. It purports to be a description of places and events connected with the building of Fort St. Louis in 1682. The persons figuring in these scenes are LaSalle, Tonti, D'Autray, certain Indian chiefs, woodsmen, priests, soldiers, Redmen, an Iroquois spy Monongonee, his adopted daughter Neonee, and LaSalle's hunter-guide Ottonoway.

The composition came about in this manner. Several years ago I took a Troop of Boy Scouts from Oswego, Illinois, to camp at Starved Rock Park. The natural attractions of the place appealed greatly to all of us, and I tried to find something in story form at the hotel news stand which I could tell to the boys around the camp fire. Not a shred of anything romantic was to be had, however, so I was compelled to wait until a later time to discover any such material. In the meantime my brain cells began to project their own creations, especially since sleep did not come readily with the care of two dozen lively boys on my hands. In the stillness of the night while the whippoorwills wailed all around the camp and an owl boomed occa-

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sionally from his tree in the vicinity of Wild Cat Canyon, the glens became peopled with Indians once more, and La Salle and his companions began to figure quite realistically in my visions.

Since then I have tried to become better acquainted with these characters, without neglecting other duties and have greatly enjoyed the little journeys made into the historic conditions of two hundred and fifty years ago.

Certain of the incidents described in the volume took place in the valleys of the Illinois, Vermilion, Richelieu and St. Lawrence and the collation of these events has helped to make this composition a conglomerate.

For the sake of convenience the material has been arranged in six books of four divisions each. The first division of each of these has little to do with the story attempted but seeks to suggest the setting of what follows, and if one will attempt to visualize the scenes under the conditions of the period portrayed and in the surroundings preserved in one of our most historic Parks of the Middle West, some of the pleasure the writer enjoyed in penning these pages will be realized by the reader. This at least is my sincere desire.

Oswego, Illinois  
June 3, 1926

JAS. R. E. CRAIGHEAD.

## CONTENTS

### BOOK I.

|    |                                  |    |
|----|----------------------------------|----|
| 1. | Starved Rock . . . . .           | 1  |
| 2. | The Coming of La Salle . . . . . | 3  |
| 3. | The Canyons . . . . .            | 12 |
| 4. | The Buffalo Hunt . . . . .       | 16 |

### BOOK II.

|    |                        |    |
|----|------------------------|----|
| 1. | The Indian . . . . .   | 23 |
| 2. | The Assembly . . . . . | 24 |
| 3. | The Council . . . . .  | 29 |
| 4. | The Enemy . . . . .    | 36 |

### BOOK III.

|    |                                    |    |
|----|------------------------------------|----|
| 1. | The Frontiersmen . . . . .         | 45 |
| 2. | The Building of the Fort . . . . . | 47 |
| 3. | D'Autray's Story . . . . .         | 52 |
| 4. | Monongonee . . . . .               | 61 |

### BOOK IV.

|    |                                   |    |
|----|-----------------------------------|----|
| 1. | Their Homely Joys . . . . .       | 65 |
| 2. | Tonti's Mission . . . . .         | 67 |
| 3. | The Opening of the Fort . . . . . | 73 |
| 4. | The Calumet Dance . . . . .       | 84 |

### BOOK V.

|    |                                       |     |
|----|---------------------------------------|-----|
| 1. | The Deepening of the Spring . . . . . | 91  |
| 2. | The Canyon of the Deer . . . . .      | 93  |
| 3. | Neonee . . . . .                      | 97  |
| 4. | As Flies the Crow . . . . .           | 103 |

### BOOK VI.

|    |                             |     |
|----|-----------------------------|-----|
| 1. | The August Blight . . . . . | 107 |
| 2. | La Salle's Lament . . . . . | 108 |
| 3. | The Iroquois . . . . .      | 112 |
| 4. | The Lover's Leap . . . . .  | 120 |





## BOOK I.

### 1. STARVED ROCK

Earth spreads her map of wonders round this Rock  
And tells a pageant story of the past,  
Of epochs reckoned by a million years,  
Of countless dynasties of bird and beast,  
Of battles waged in elemental wars,  
And wreck of mountains overturned; and rocks  
Upheaved and gored by glaciers' grinding horns,  
Till nature spread upon the scarred remains  
Her healing robe and bound the gaping wounds  
And wooed the mangled form to life again.

Or should the gleaming river on her course  
Like some fair creature in her turn respond  
With whispers such as happy lovers use,  
And tell what scenes her never sleeping eyes  
Beheld upon her banks, and all that pressed  
Upon her breast in hopeful argosy  
And daring enterprise, and love's brave quest,  
Her narrative were rich with history's lore.

To catch these tales and whispers of the past  
My pen essays, and neath the plume-like pines,  
The stalwart oaks, the vine-draped shelves of cliff  
My soul would come as reverent pilgrim might

Within the temple gates to praise his God;  
For here, as at bleak Horeb's cave are left  
The marks of power, in water-carven glen,  
And highway cloven to the sea by flood,  
To show Who passed this way in majesty.  
And still the surety of His presence bides  
On quiet meadows sleeping in the sun;  
On waters glinting soft beneath the stars,  
On islands fringed by sharp-reflected trees,  
On forests stirring restless as the sea,  
On cliff-bound hills fresh-scarred by Labor's hand,  
On homesteads where the seals of peace are set,  
On cities where the smoky pillars rest.

Here underneath these blue and bending skies  
Which smile o'er leagues of fertile valley fields,  
The Indians built their rude metropolis,  
And ploughed the river with their bark canoes.  
Here on this vantage Rock the Frenchmen stood  
And dreamed of Empire stretched from Sea to Gulf,  
Where wafted lilies of the fleur-de-lis,  
And rose the cross on myriad stately spires.  
Here Destiny a shifting fortune framed  
And passed the scepter to the English power  
Which in its turn gave way to nobler sons  
Who sought the larger freedom of the soul.

So enter in with me these templed haunts  
Which lie around our famous northern Rock,  
And listen whilst my silvan Muse relates

The whispers of the water and the wood;  
The weird traditions of the races gone.

## 2. THE COMING OF LA SALLE

Above La Vantum's range of wooded hills  
The sun hung low among the opal mists  
Which marked the Indian summer's late decline,  
When up the western waterway that flowed  
Before \*Kaskaskia's stretch of Redmen's huts  
Four birch canoes pressed steadily against  
The placid river's course until abreast  
The village, where hut, lodge, and wigwam lay  
As though asleep within the drowsy haze.  
No warriors lounged upon the vacant grounds,  
Nor naked children played upon the paths,—  
The hush of evening rested on the place  
And stillness brooded like a nesting dove.  
Apprized of this unwonted quietude  
The men within their laden vessels paused,  
And he who led the fleet of water craft  
Gave silent signal to the voyageurs,  
And guardedly the paddlers put to shore.  
Here council for a moment stayed advance,  
And then the leader with his Indian guide  
Went up the river bank and crossed the space  
Which lay between the stream and silent town.

A master was this captain of the band,

\*The French name of the town, La Vantum, and the Indian name, Kaskaskia are used interchangeably.

Who strode the path with purpose in his tread,  
Commanding, straight as is the mountain pine,  
An Atlas in his strength, his gray eye lit  
With that strange fire the visionary gleams  
In hope's mirage and evanescent dreams.  
An eagle feather crowned his beaver cap  
And beaded moccasins encased his feet,  
His deerskin raiment hung with easy grace  
Upon a sinewy form of regal mold.  
No weapon in his hand he bore, but held  
With careful grasp a carven calumet  
And so advanced upon the Indian town.  
Beside him moved with lithe and agile tread  
His youthful hunter-guide, Ottonoway,  
Who though descended from an eastern tribe  
Had ranged these western wilds for thirty moons  
In wider training for his chief's estate,  
And knew each watercourse and woodland trail,  
And lore of prairie, wilderness and lake  
As though a sachem of this far domain.

So moved these two across the open space,  
And soon they saw a squaw among the huts  
And in the sunshine near her on the ground  
An aged chief sat, too old to longer bend  
The white-ash bow and follow in the chase.  
These they approached. The Indians sensing quick  
The leader to be French betrayed no fear.  
With gentle grace the stranger straightway said,  
"I am La Salle who but two winters since

Passed on these waters to the west. When here  
The Iroquois had done their hellish work,  
And if I mark aright I saw you then  
With others of your tribe removed far south.”  
Addressed in terms of such respect which spared  
The feelings of a chief who once had fled  
Before his foes the old man made reply  
And gave impassive welcome to his guests  
With answer to each question asked. “The braves,”  
Said he, “had left at noon to start the drive  
Of buffalo toward the rock upstream  
And with the morning run them to the kill;  
Tomorrow there will be much meat in camp  
And still a larger stock the following day,  
And if you strangers share our lodge, the braves  
Will give you fitting welcome on return.”

To him La Salle replied that with his men  
He'd camp beside the Rock across the stream,  
And later might return. This said, he left  
And soon again the birchen water-craft  
The current crossed toward the southern shore.  
From far the paddlers saw the castled crag  
Rise gray and seamed above the shining flood,  
The white pine clinging on its dizzy shelves  
And pushing up with stunted growth to brush  
Their boughs against the roots of other trees  
On loftier foothold till their free tops waved  
Defiant as the plume on warrior's crest.  
A stone's cast from the Rock the trim canoes

Were brought to shore and speedily the camp  
Was formed and fire set burning to prepare  
The evening meal.

Meantime the Sieur La Salle  
With D'Autray as companion, took a trail  
That led through sand and crumbling rock to where  
Behind the bristling crag's bold head they might  
Climb up and gain the summit's level crest  
Where waved the pines their signals to the stream.  
This Sieur La Salle crossed quickly with his mate  
And from the high Rock's edge drew back a limb  
Which hid the view in part, then proudly said,  
"See, is it not as I described the site  
Where France shall build her throne and here retrieve  
The loss of centuries." Spell-bound his friend  
With sweeping gaze looked from the aerie height  
Across the fertile valley to the hills  
Where golden Autumn had with artist hand  
Heaped gorgeous colors in profusion wild,  
As though a hundred rainbows there had broke  
And left the river winding through the wreck  
Past islands weighted with their summer's yield  
Of maize, pawpaw, squash, grape and purpling plum  
And wilder growth amid the water weeds.  
Far northward where the hunters built their fires  
The filmy lines of smoke bestreaked the sky,  
And in the intervening range of space  
Prairie and forest, river, vale and hill  
Gave token of the Redman's paradise.

La Salle's companion once more viewed the scene  
And traced the rivers island-studded course  
From east to west until the silvery stream  
Was lost in evening's shimmering gray, then said,  
"It is indeed a wonder spot." La Salle  
With kindling eye then spoke. "In all the leagues  
Between the Gulf and Canada there is  
No spot so rich in promise for fair France  
As is this Rock from which we look to-day.  
Here may be set the key-stone in the arch  
Of our defense against the English line;  
Here made the rally center of the tribes  
To fight the savage Iroquois. And here  
On this high Rock our guns can well protect  
The valley fields; our fort with ease defy  
Whatever foes appear; and from this base  
Boats can deploy to gather stores of wealth  
And make secure our future enterprise,  
Because we tap an El Dorado's source.  
We then shall sail by Crevecour and Prudhomme  
And out upon the southern Gulf toward France  
With cargoes of such pelts that merchants there  
Shall look amazed to see our rich supplies.  
The biting winds of ice-bound Montreal,  
Three Rivers and Quebec we can avoid,  
And from the frozen regions of the north  
Sail happily abroad by open stream.  
Recall our lengthy voyage to this place!  
From Green Bay up the Fox we passed, then crossed  
The portage to Wisconsin's winding course



And followed till it merged with \*Colbert's flood;  
Then on those waters to this river's flow  
And on its quiet bosom paddled here.  
We've noted every mark betokening growth  
Of Empire for the future years and here  
Have come convinced the course of kingdom lies  
Along this stream. From Anticosti's isle  
To where at Colbert's distant mouth  
We nailed the arms of France, I say again  
No place has more of promise than this Rock.  
Here then we'll stem the wrath of savages,  
Here bid defiance to the English hordes,  
Here win a greater wealth than that is heaped  
In old Rochelle, and lead the native tribes  
To Church and King. On lofty hinder plains  
Shall rise a guardian city like Quebec,  
The while our fort commands the water way."  
Approvingly Sieur D'Autray heard his friend,  
And while the sunset shadows grew they talked  
Until a signal from the camp below  
Gave warning that the evening meal was spread.  
Arriving at the river's sandy marge  
They fed on mallards taken in the swamps  
And ate their corn-bread warm from friendly fire.

While seated thus beneath the trees they saw  
A graceful craft swing round the point below,  
And deftly plied by skillful hands, approach  
Their feasting place. The little vessel skirred

\*The name formerly given to the Mississippi river.







THE PADDLE STAYED THE LITTLE BARQUE AT POISE

The river like a feather blown in air;  
An Indian squaw sat stolid in the stern  
And standing just before a lissome girl  
With practiced hand her paddle dipped and pressed  
Against the water's yielding breast. She seemed  
A wood-nymph happily at play; her skin  
Nut brown, her gaudy blanket folded round  
A form as pliant as the willow's branch;  
Less harsh her features seemed than faces known  
Throughout these western wilds, as if some strain  
Of alien blood was coursing through her veins.  
She drove her boat against the sluggish flow  
Well out the stream until abreast the group,  
Then quickly veered her craft and swiftly shot  
Straight shoreward like an arrow from taut string.

The feasting circle marked the deft approach  
And sensed by it some errand of respect.  
La Salle arose, and with him moved his guide  
To station closer to the river's edge.  
Like bird alighted on a swaying bough,  
The paddle stayed the little barque at poise,  
The while the elder Indian woman spoke:  
"Chief Mogree sends the Sieur this further word  
To give you welcome to our valley's range,  
And bid you wait the coming of our braves  
That they more fitting tokens may bestow,  
But these accept as pledge of our good will."  
With this she threw a blanket back and there  
Disclosed three baskets filled with plums, pawpaws,

Persimmons, nuts, dried berries, corn,—such store  
As natives gather for their winter use.

With courtly grace the *Sieur La Salle* replied,  
“We count it honor to receive these gifts  
From those we know as friends in toil and arms.  
Our King in distant France whose sway we owe  
Throughout these wide and ample forest lands  
Has bade us live at peace with all the tribes  
And add the lengthening links to friendship’s chain  
Until it runs through every hut and lodge  
And binds together in one common bond.  
Right gladly will we tarry then until  
Your braves return and council can be held  
For we have matters to propose assured  
To bring advantage to your noble tribe;  
This word with our esteem bear to your chief.”

While these bland courtesies were interchanged  
The Indian maiden’s glances swept the scene,  
The speaker’s face, the feasters on the shore,  
The camp’s disorder, and the smoking coals,  
Then resting on the leader’s hunter-guide  
She saw his figure straight as mountain ash  
With grace and strength in every line. His face  
Immobile as a mask and dark of hue,  
His hair in color like the wing of crow,  
His eye as keen as is the sparrow hawk’s  
To read the secrets of the thicket’s maze.  
Small need in this survey *Neonee* took

To sense the guide was of a forest race  
And of a tribe remote, but still her gaze  
Was centered on his face as though the fates  
Had set for her their lodestone on his brow  
And there proclaimed the cord has found its bow.  
And he in turn had riveted his look  
On her as though some long-expected form  
Had issued from the land of dreams and stood  
Before him in the sunset glow and mist.  
The faintest movement only of the hand  
He made unseen by all save her, and then  
He moved away, the forest for his screen.

Tomorrow would the hunters end their hunt,  
The squaw had made reply. Then promising  
To take La Salle's good word and pledge to them,  
The graceful vessel thrust with skill from shore  
And drifted downward by the water's edge.  
Some little distance on her way the maid  
Beheld again amid the fringing boughs,  
The face of Sieur La Salle's young guide,—a glimpse  
So brief it might have been a flash of light  
Upon the leaves. And with the sight she heard  
A heavy note,—the great owl's evening call,  
And in response, as though the spell of dusk  
Were on her soul, she sent across the wave  
The plaintive sobbing cry of whippoorwill;  
Then bending on her paddle drove her craft  
With happy freedom down the gilded stream.



Thus budding love despite observing eyes  
Its first expression finds and grows elate.

The youthful hunter to the group returns  
And later asks to take a light canoe  
And seek for deer along the river shore;  
The favor granted he at once departs,  
Drops slowly down the stream and soon is lost  
In deepening shadows, and although his quest  
Is long delayed and sleep has claimed the camp  
When he returns he brings no venison,  
For on the hill above the Indian town  
A great owl's solemn call was heard that eve  
And in the cornfield by the lodges' shade  
A mournful whippoorwill's reply was given,  
And through the bottomlands the sounds advanced  
Until the watchful moon told listening night  
That lovers of a forest race had met.

### 3. THE CANYONS

With morning's crimson in the eastern sky  
The camp awoke. In stealth the red fox hid;  
From watery beds the wild ducks rose and called,  
Then circled swiftly to their feeding grounds;  
From hickory bough the squirrel stripped the nut,  
While circling on the deadened trunks for food,  
The nut hatch sounded sharp his nasal notes;  
The anxious jays with shrill protest proclaimed  
The presence of the strangers in the wood;

Like incense rose the smoke in peaceful cloud  
To fill the forest aisles, and once again  
The camp bestirred itself to active life.

Soon from the bank the birch canoes were pushed,  
And paddled slowly by the wooded shore,  
And often stayed while Sieur La Salle, his guide,  
And D'Autray ranged the bluffs and openings,  
Examined closely timber, fauna, shale,  
And beetling walls of curious carven cliff,  
And found strange fashioned wonders on their way,—  
Here rocky piles like hives of bees were formed,  
And there again like ancient pulpits reared.  
A yet more wild confusion in the glens  
Which opened to their wondering gaze they found  
Where woodbine, ivy, bracken, bush and tree  
Struggled for life among the prostrate rocks  
Released from dizzy height by frost and flood.  
To some of these he called his men to come  
And view the handiwork of ages gone,  
And as they entered awe gave place to jest,  
Then crude remarks about the Devil's art,  
And horde of imps who here had made their home,  
Consorting with the witches and the gnomes.  
And so with superstitious names and terms  
They titled cavern, cliff, and waterfall  
With nomenclature of their boorish wit.

One spot of wildness claimed their interest  
A half league from the Rock. Here blackened logs

Were littered on a little wooded plain  
Which lay before the opening in the bluffs,  
And half-burned limbs and tree trunks strewed the  
ground—

Mute symbols of past cruel tragedies.  
“This,” said their guide, “is where the Iroquois  
Bring in their prisoners to test by fire  
And knife. It is a favorite sport of theirs,  
And what these hellish butchers do is told  
To quiet children from the Huron camp  
To Natchez by the Mississabe’s shore.”

The voyageurs appraised the scene with gaze  
Which quickly reckoned with the features shown,—  
A forest plain along the river shore  
A tiny brook, a lichened cliff beyond,  
Which towered above the lonely gruesome spot.  
They followed for a bow shot’s space the stream,  
Then where it forked one tributary traced  
Through tangled underbrush, o’er fallen trees,  
Neath swaying vines and shelves of pendent fern,  
And in the shade of poplar, pine, and elm  
Until the pathway stopped against a wall  
Beside a pool of crystal amethyst.  
A mighty rock wrenched from the height above  
Amidst a perfect maze of crimson vines,  
Below the fissured cascade’s flashing lights,  
Stood lonely sentinel to guard the gem.  
Here ropelike woodbine climbed the hoary cliffs  
And clutched the screening treetops high o’erhead.



The men turned back and sought the second glen;  
This branch they found led o'er a channel hewn  
Through stone by wasting floods of ages gone,  
And following it they came at length to see  
Wide curving shelves of cliff o'er which there fell  
With rhythmic sound a silvery cataract.  
Thus formed, these canyons like a horse-shoe vast,  
Reached in among the cliffs and left the heels  
Deep bedded in the rock, whereas the toe  
Lay resting 'gainst a level stretch of ground  
Beside the brook. It was an eerie spot  
From whence the western wall of bluff drew back  
As though to flee the scenes enacted there;  
And could these men have glimpsed how hidden Fate  
Should, ere a year have passed, bring them again  
To look upon this tragic plain in dress  
Of fire and fury, their brave hearts had quailed.  
But future scenes in mercy are withheld.

All through the morning hours the voyageurs  
Pressed on by stream and shore from glen to glen,  
And came at length upon a sandy cave  
Carved out by water's action from the hill  
And rounded like a huge inverted bowl  
One side of which seemed shorn away, then filled  
In part by crumbling rock and flood's debris.  
Around this mound the gilded maples spread  
Their leafy folds whence fell the sun's soft rays  
Upon the little group which sat and talked  
And listened as Ottonoway explained

The gathering of the tribes from near and far,  
The framing of their treaties and their laws,  
And how these councils kept their braves in check.  
He showed where sat the old men of the tribes,  
Where sat the chiefs and where the warriors sat;  
He told of speeches made and belts exchanged,  
And how they smoked the calumet; and then  
He pointed to the totems rudely sketched  
Upon the walls in pledge of fealty.

With sign and simple speech he told his tale  
And so beguiled the fleeting hour of morn.

#### 4. THE BUFFALO HUNT

As shifts the sun unwearied on his course,  
So Sieur La Salle, unresting, led his men  
Along the river trail to other scenes.  
Once more they drove their birchen craft upstream,  
Nor stopped again until they came abreast  
A naked cliff upon the northern shore.  
Here suddenly they heard sharp yells and cries  
Resounding on the high plateau o'erhead.  
They saw no form, but still the volume grew,  
And with it came a sound like thunder deep  
Which rolled across the plain with surging swell  
And shoutings mingling on the morning air.  
Each man within his craft looked to his gun  
In readiness against surprise from foe,  
But while they primed their flintlocks for the fray

And wondered at the savage shouts and cries,  
This strange confusion quickly died away.

With every sense alert the voyageurs  
Pulled in their craft to shore with dexterous hands,  
And crept along the narrow marge to learn  
The cause of this wild bedlam on the heights.  
The shouts, they knew on second thought, were not  
The challenge of the Redman to his foe,  
But what they might presage they vaguely sensed,  
So cautiously they found a landing place  
And stole like autumn shadows through the trees.  
They did not know the spot nor that at dawn  
The Indian hunters from La Vantum's huts  
Had placed their men along the trails far north  
And there began the drive of buffalo  
Toward the wide plateau and fatal rock.

As silent as the glowing dawn itself  
The drive began and silent still advanced,  
As grew the herd and moved toward the south  
Along familiar paths and grazing lands.  
With need to turn the course a hunter rose  
And steered the tide of grazing life at will,  
Cut out the mangy bulls which followed close,  
And with no sound nor haste pressed on the rear  
And urged the slow advance of heavy brutes.  
Down from the higher prairie grazing lands,  
By way of rock-girt paths to lower ground,  
Through boggy trails and sloughlike stretches passed

The lazy beasts and browsed on luscious grass  
And took the pathways to the fatal plain.  
And still no noise nor haste on hunters' part,  
And yet the herd kept on in slow advance,  
And if a bull at times impatient grew  
And sought to lead away his followers,  
His course was not opposed, so great the throng,—  
The tide was subtly stemmed and turned again  
To mingle with the onward moving host.  
Thus did the herd graze slowly up the slope  
And spread itself upon the rock-bound plain,  
Hemmed in by bluffs that dropped sheer fifty feet  
On every side and narrowed to the east.  
And here they ranged at will and lazily fed  
And moved toward the fatal precipice.  
Then on the instant one shrill call rang sharp  
Across the plain, and every hunter rose  
And rushed with curdling shout upon the herd.  
The heavy hoofs beat hard upon the ground,  
Dust rose in thickening clouds above the drove,  
Fire flamed from grassy bundles caught on spears,  
And hurtling arrows from the bended bows  
Drove panic on the leaders of the herd.  
One open space alone was left by which  
Escape seemed possible, and off this way  
The big bulls dashed to find too late they stood  
Upon the fatal sharp cut brink of rock  
Which fell away sheer and precipitous.  
They sought to turn, but others coming on  
With sting of arrows in their flanks pressed hard

Against these first and forced them out and down,  
Until the whole was one mad surge of death,  
And mangled bodies, broken limbed, lay heaped  
Upon the charnel slope beneath the bluff.

As leaped the hindmost to their death  
One savage shout of triumph rent the air,  
And through the woods below there streamed a host  
Of Indians ready with the axe and spear  
To smite and drive the finishing weapon home.  
And with them came the squaws and shouting boys  
Ready to drag apart the heavy brutes,  
And bleed and flay and carve the choicest parts,  
And make supply against the winter's need.  
Soon all the slope became a shamble vast  
Which reeked with smell of blood and gasses freed;  
Haunches were cut to be conveyed on poles  
And drawn by ponies to La Vantum's huts,  
Or carried to the nearby river's edge  
And so borne home by raft or elm canoe.  
In pots and kettles slung above the fires  
The roasts gave meaty odors to the air.  
The hunters from the bluff had found their way  
And lounged disorderly in groups near by,  
Or spread the black meat on the branch to broil,  
And thus relieve their long-continued fast.  
So occupied were they and so relaxed  
They lost their native caution for the hour,  
When suddenly a warning cry was raised,  
And quick as spring of cat each Indian's hand

Was at his weapon, for upon the slope  
Small space away stood half a score of men  
Armed for encounter, and with coolness stamped  
To show them proved in dangers of the wood.  
Each on the other looked, in readiness  
To raise the war whoop, when La Salle advanced  
Extending in his hand the calumet.

\*"Onontio his greeting sends," he said,  
"To you his children of the north and west,  
And bids me as his envoy say to you  
He has a message ye may hear at time  
And place convenient for the scattered tribes."  
As thus he spoke a chief, Chassagoac,  
Advanced with friendly mien and promptly said,  
"I know you by the grace of favors done,  
And for the kindly aid bestowed on us  
When last you came this way, we welcome you;  
Nor would we now presume to fix a date  
And name a place for council lest our choice  
Might work an inconvenience in your plans.  
Do you but name the day and choose the spot,  
Our scattered tribes will rally at the word."

Thus importuned La Salle decision gave,  
"This morn we chanced upon your Council Cave  
A league off on the other shore. What place  
More fit if there six days removed we meet.  
This will suffice to summon your allies  
And bring our friends from Crevecour and the Lake."

\*The Indian name for the Governor of Canada.

The bronze-hued redmen grunted their assent,  
And later shared their kettles' savory stew,  
Then all straightway sent out their messengers  
By woodland paths and river's trackless trails.  
The squaws meanwhile prepared their winter stores,  
The braves lounged lazily in sunny nooks,  
And with declining day La Salle retired  
And sought his bivouac near the castled Rock.  
And late that night above the Indian town  
Was heard again the great owl's solemn chant,  
And from the cornfield in the bottom land  
The mournful whippoorwill's repeated cry.  
And at this witching hour had sentry looked  
Among the sleepers round the dying fire,  
Below the pine-plumed Rock he would have seen  
Ottonoway was absent from his place.  
And had the withered squaw but flashed a brand  
Within the tepee half a league away  
She had discovered her young charge had flown,  
And yet she found her sleeping there at dawn.





## BOOK II.

### 1. THE INDIAN

The glory of a vanquished race departs  
As fades the sunlight of a summer day  
Which lingers long on purple mountain peak  
Before it dies in slowly deepening night  
And dying leaves its beauty on the heights.

For those who once on hill and plain deployed,  
And trod the lonely paths of wilderness,  
And ranged in hunting parties through the wilds,  
Or fished along the silver-glinting streams,  
Or waged their warfare with ancestral foes,  
The strange memorials of their passing show  
In valley mounds and tracings on the cliffs,  
And flints and flaying-stones upturned afield,  
And quaint traditions of a mystic past.

Through all the complex maze of circumstance  
And harsh environment of cruel age  
How still in living characters remain  
The noble outlines of the primal race:—  
A heart responsive to a kindness shown  
And linked with unforgetfulness till death;  
A nature loyal to its tribe and clan  
Through every hardship torture might devise;

A spirit voicing in religious rite  
A simple faith in dim-sensed Deity.  
A race of poets they, who not in verse  
The subtle meanings of expression told,  
But in the names they gave to waterfalls  
And mountains, valleys, rivers, rocks, and woods.

We search the scanty records of the past  
And find their natures similar to ours;  
By evil passion swayed, their souls' fine harp  
Clangs out of tune with base and vicious din,  
But touched by kindness gives response with strain  
Of richest tone and sweetest melody,  
Since kindred disposition actuates  
And meets in kind the conduct of our race.

## 2. THE ASSEMBLY

The morning of the sixth day from the hunt  
Had scarcely dawned along the Illinois  
When virile life bestirred upon its banks  
From where the \*Pesticoui its silvery flood  
Poured in to swell the larger flow all down  
To †Arimoni's willow-fringed mouth.  
Along the misty shores encampments woke  
And smoke began to curl from countless fires;  
Kaskaskia roused, excited by the stir  
Of life unusual in her daily round,  
And fed with haste the gruff impatient bands

\*The Fox River.

†The Vermilion.

Who hurried quickly toward the river front  
Intent to join the convoy for the Cave.

The Sieur La Salle meanwhile had tasked his men  
In preparation for the great event;  
In person to the village he had gone  
And begged the largest kettles for the day,  
And purchased stores of meal, and these his men  
Had brought and at his bidding set in place  
Nearby the cave where now a highway runs.  
Ottonoway, his skillful hunter guide,  
Had ranged the forests and the teeming swamps,  
And with his aids brought in a score of deer,  
Two elk, a bison and a cumbrous heap  
Of turkey, mallard, bustards and wild fowl  
With which to satiate the gathered tribes.  
Laurens Chapelle, a famous woodland chef,  
Who with La Salle had sailed the Colbert's length,  
Was here the master of the barbecue  
And steaming kettles with their grateful stew.

Before the sun was risen two hours high  
The river teemed with craft of varied sort  
Which centered on the shore near Council Cave.  
On Pestecoui's clear current came the chiefs  
From Maramac and villages beyond;  
Au Sable's shadowy waters rolling out  
From loamy prairie land bore on their crest  
The stalwart warriors from the river's source;  
From forests on the Kankakee, canoes

Of elm conveyed the old men and the chiefs  
With others from St. Joseph's osiered banks.  
A long convoy of boats from fair Des Plaines  
Brought down the tribesmen from her shores,  
And from their lodges on Lake Michigan.  
So also from the regions south and west  
They came down Arimoni's tortuous course,  
And up the windings of the Illinois;  
From lodges far toward the setting sun,—  
Peoria's tree-fringed lake and quiet shore  
And even by the Mississippi's strand;  
Braves, too, from camps along the limpid Rock  
Came with their chiefs and lordly sagamores  
And merged with others at Kaskaskia's door.

Nor on the river's watery lanes alone  
The tribes came rallying to their Council Cave.  
On every trail of prairie and of wood  
The files of warriors and their chiefs were seen.  
They followed paths along the water's edge  
Or took the higher trails upon the bluffs,  
Or came the weary ways across the plains  
From distant village and from lonely lodge.  
And so by watercourse and path they came,  
Piankishaws, Fox, Weas, Kickapoos,  
Miamis, Ottawas, Peorias,  
Mascoutins and the bands of Illinois,  
With visitors from other ranging tribes.  
Along the river bank before the Cave  
And in the little glen hard by they wait

The coming of La Salle. Some broke their fast  
With bowls of meal; some on their blankets lounged,  
Some stood in groups apart beneath the trees,  
All watching close the chef directions give  
In preparation for the noon-tide feast.

At length the watchers by the river's edge  
Sent up a shout by which the Indians knew  
The leader of the French was drawing near;  
And soon they saw arriving on the path  
Which led across the fragrant bottom land,  
The troop attendant on the Sieur La Salle.  
The men from Fort Miami led the van.  
Fur-capped and clad in well tanned hide of deer,  
They bore their rifles with the easy grace  
Of men familiar with the woodland trails.  
Behind them marched the band from Crevecour's post  
With Tonti, Sieur La Salle's most trusted friend,  
In lead, equipped with breastplate, helm and sword,  
His iron hand inactive at his side.  
Next came two priests in black whose long robes fell  
With ample folds from shoulder to the ground,  
And each adorned by strings of jangling beads  
To which a shining crucifix was linked.  
These two were followed by four soldiers garbed  
Like those detailed for duty at Quebec,  
And bearing packs of gifts to be bestowed.  
Short space behind another soldier came  
With hide of deer white as the mountain snow,

In which the precious wampam belts were wrapped  
Against their showing in the council's speech.  
Next in the moving line, Ottonoway  
Proceeded with the feathered calumet,  
Himself bedecked with headdress of a chief.

Then came La Salle arrayed in dress of court  
Such as the nobles wore in far Versailles  
And which in copper trunk he'd brought with him  
For service on occasion such as this.  
His doublet, hose and silver-buckled shoes  
Set off the contour of his limbs with grace,  
His ruffled front and snowy wristbands showed  
Beneath a silken tunic of the hue  
Of woodbine crimsoned by the early frosts;  
A cloak of purple graced his well-knit form,  
A low crowned hat with egret's snow-white plume  
Bedecked his head and gave him princely poise.

Behind, Sieur D'Autray led the remnant's file  
Of hardy woodsmen and of voyageurs,  
And thus they marched across the bottom land.  
The line swung by the place of barbecue  
And passing round a buttress of the cliff,  
Ascended to the earthen tree-grown mound  
Which blocked the entrance of the cavern's mouth.  
Here bison robes were spread upon the earth  
Where Sieur La Salle, his aides, the black robed priests,  
The lordly chiefs and sagamores found seats,

And round them, circling on the sandy floor,  
There filed and sat the rows of bronze-hued braves.

### 3. THE COUNCIL

Soon as this strange assembly in the cave  
In semi-rings was seated round the mound  
On which reclined the chiefs and Sieur La Salle,  
Chassagoac, the spokesman of his tribe,  
Arose, and with becoming dignity  
Addressed the Frenchmen with these welcoming words:  
"To-day we thank you for your visit here,  
The sun has never shone upon these hills  
So bright nor with a light so rich and warm;  
And never have our cornfields showed such yield  
Nor prairies such vast herds of buffalo.  
The autumn lengthens into golden days  
And winter keeps his distance from our town  
While you are here within our valley range,  
Our river never flowed more free from rocks  
And danger to our craft than since you came.  
We hail you, brothers, as deliverers  
From winter's cold and gnawing hunger's pangs  
And our arch enemies, the Iroquois."

By pre-arrangement Tonti rose and spoke  
An answer to the chief, designed to call  
In turn expression from the gathered tribes.  
He said, Though bright the sunlight fell afield  
And with its grateful rays warmed mother earth,



Still brighter was the light of friendship's glow  
And warmer was the fire in trusting hearts.  
A river never flowed so free from rocks  
As that vast stream of human intercourse  
When prejudice and hatred were removed  
And races wrought in trustful friendliness.  
The fields and forests gave their richest yield  
When peace and confidence in mutual cause  
Were linked together for the weal of all,  
And sure protection from a common foe;  
This was the object of their visit here,  
This, too, the wish of king and governor,  
And this the message couched in friendly terms  
The noble *Sieur La Salle* was charged to give.  
But lest it fall like seed too early sown  
And which becomes the prey of blighting frosts,  
He had no welcome tidings for the tribes,  
Until he knew the mind of these here met.  
When springtime sun has warmed the mellow earth,  
And oak-buds swell to size of squirrel's ears,  
The squaws then know 'tis time to plant the maize,  
So *Sieur La Salle* the signs of friendliness  
Would learn to-day and if the time were ripe  
Cast in his seed. If not, then might he pass  
To other tribesmen further west and leave  
His benison of peace, good-will with them.  
He would but learn the truth and their desires,  
If friendship and protection from the French  
They should prefer to dread of Iroquois,  
Then should they speak and tell their true resolves.



He sat, and through the ranks of chiefs and braves  
Slight stir was made, then from among the group  
Where sat the old men of the tribes, one rose  
Who in his days of strength had been the peer  
Of all the spokesmen in these western wilds,  
And who could yet with skill of ready speech  
Direct the currents of the native mind  
And turn them into channels as he willed.  
He stood erect before the sitting throng,  
And spoke with force and fire of former days.  
"Hear, tribesmen of the plains and woods," said he,  
"And see if I declare not words of truth.  
Long have I ranged these regions from the Lakes  
To that great river by the setting sun;  
Here have I slain the bison and the deer,  
Here driven foes from this our hunting range,  
And here with you stood leagued to guard our homes  
And never yielded ground nor knew a fear,  
Save when those human wolves, the Iroquois,  
Came down with weapons drenched in kinsmen's blood.  
And who of us can tell when once again  
Their curdling yells will split the midnight air,  
And kindling flames will lay our village low,  
And tomahawk and knife slay child and squaw.  
There is no wall to stay this tide of death  
Unless it be the ranks of trusted French,  
For they have ever been our helpful friends  
From Anticosti to the Piasa,  
And we have been to them, and will be still  
As is the cord to hunter's hickory bow,

Or bank to stream or bark to trunk of tree,  
Hear, brothers, our true pledge of fealty."

In turn the chiefs and spokesmen of the tribes  
Arose and gave expression in accord.  
A chieftain from the Winnebagoes said  
So long as sun should shine and waters flow  
And rosy color tint the eglantine,  
His tribe would hold the French in loved esteem;  
For had they not in place of flint and bow  
Bestowed the axe and knife, and given the gun  
By which they shot their grouse and venison.  
Then too, had not the French shown friendship such  
As others coming to these shores had not,  
For they displayed a finer courtesy  
And mated with the women of the tribes;  
And as the left hand to the right was joined  
In common purpose for the body's good,  
So were the Winnebagoes with the French .

In terms like these their orators declared  
Their loyalty and love toward the French.  
A chieftain of the Illinois recalled  
How when two years before, the foe had come  
And burned their town, profaned their burying ground,  
And driven their brave warriors to the west,  
The French had reached their strong, protecting arm  
Across the lakes from distant Canada  
And given comfort in the hour of woe:—

The Sieur La Salle himself, the ministrant.  
"Such kindness," said the chief, "is not forgot."

Another said, "A priest once came to us  
Who told us of the Virgin and her Son,  
The Cross, the Father's home, the burning Hell;  
Then up the river passed in shining light  
And so we saw his glowing face no more.  
But with us still remains the memory  
Of gracious words and yet more gracious deeds  
And longings for a like kind ministry.  
Will not the French grant such request to us?"

On this the black-robed Hennepin arose,  
And stretching forth his hands, he said,  
"Ye children of the forests, listen, all.  
I tell you of the mighty Manitou  
Who has great plans and purposes designed  
In which the nations as the bucket's drops  
Are counted and as dust upon the scales.  
He sits upon the circle of the earth  
And we before Him as grasshoppers stir;  
He stretches out the heavens as a sheet  
And spreads them as a tent in which to dwell.  
In these great purposes devised for you,  
Know well His Word will have its rightful place,  
With holy priests for its interpreters  
And empty you will not be sent away;  
Somewhere within these purposes have we  
A part to play in bringing you this Truth.

If ye be willing ye shall eat rich fruit,  
If ye rebel, the alien shall devour."

So spake the priest, and after him a chief,  
Renowned for power and wisdom, slowly rose;  
He stood before the throng in regal dress,  
A crest of eagle feathers o'er his brow  
Which fell away from strands of jet black hair,  
Like flowing mane upon a stallion's neck.  
He held a fox skin underneath his arm  
Firm bound by thongs with otter tails attached;  
These he untied and so unrolled the skin,  
Disclosing six rich wampum belts within  
Which he arranged in order for his speech.  
He spoke with quiet dignity and told  
How once prevailed upon by Joliet,  
He, with four others from his tribal bounds,  
Had crossed the portage to the heaving Lakes  
And passed by many waters to a stream  
Where crashed and boomed a mighty cataract  
As though the Illinois in full flood tide  
Fell thundering from bluffs of triple height.  
This river with its boiling whirlpools passed,  
He entered next a lake and from it sailed  
A watery highway mongst a thousand isles,  
And down a white-capped, maddened course of waves,  
And so to Montreal and far Quebec.

There he had seen vast houses on the cliffs,  
Onontio's home, and where the Black Robes dwelt,

There had he seen a mighty fort of stone,  
And from its sides great iron guns belched flame  
With voices louder than the thunder's roll,  
And soldiers kept the walls or marched the streets  
To rattling drums, and everywhere was power.  
Below the cliffs the monstrous ships came in  
With bales and boxes full of magic things,  
And these, the white men said, came from a land  
Across a sea yet wider and more wild  
Than were the Lakes traversed by Joliet,  
And in that land the houses were so great  
That these upon the cliffs were but as toys.  
The white men's chief, Onontio, gave gifts  
To carry to the people of the west.  
"Here," said the chief, "in token of his grace,  
I give these belts in pledge of fealty.  
This one in memory of the kindness shown,  
To bind us to your royal governor;  
This second to the power he represents,  
This third to you, his envoy, sent to us,  
This fourth shall represent our tribes' good-will,  
This fifth the favor of the other tribes,  
This last to crown the loyalty of all."

These wampum belts arranged to suit his words  
He spread in order on the mound,  
Then gave them one by one to Sieur La Salle  
Who rose in prompt acknowledgment and said,  
"Such pledges given well demand of me  
More gracious answer than can now be made;

The sun has long since passed the mark of noon,  
The meats and kettles of Laurens Chappelle  
Are waiting for our eager hands below,  
And having feasted for an hour we then  
Will here return and I shall bear to you  
The message charged me by Onontio."

With this he waved his hand and led the way,  
The chiefs and sachems coming close behind,  
And after them the thronging crowd of braves.  
They passed around the shoulder of the rock,  
And swarming down the slope soon reached the place  
Where steamed the kettles and the roasted meats.  
Here, sitting on the ground, their bowls were filled  
And viands served on fresh plucked linden leaves.  
So fed they all like gormands till the fowl  
The venison, the carcasses of elk,  
And roasts of buffalo had been devoured,  
Then at the running brook they quenched their thirst,  
And strolled again toward the Council Cave.

#### 4. THE ENEMY

Once more in circled ranks upon the sand  
Within the hidden cavern's yawning mouth,  
The warriors sat around the tree-grown mound  
In readiness to hear La Salle's reply.  
He rose before the assembled throng, and stood  
In splendor of his courtly crimson dress

With background curtain of the autumn wood,  
While thus in terms of simple speech he spoke:

“My brothers, I have heard your friendly words  
And in the wampum belts your chief bestowed  
Have read the tokens of your loyalty,  
So feel the time is ripe to set the seal  
Upon some compact of our mutual faith  
To bind the French with you in closer bonds.  
Onontio has charged me to express  
His good will to his children of the West,  
His deep concern for their best interest.  
From his great house toward the eastern sea  
He sends you tokens of regard and grace,  
And bids me here bestow these gifts on you.”  
With this he signed the men who bore the packs  
Along the pathway from the river’s marge;  
And at the sign their contents were disclosed,—  
Knives, hatchets, beads, and bolts of brilliant cloth,  
With heavier wares, axe blades, a sheaf of guns,  
And other gear to please the savage mind.  
As from the knoll-like mound this goodly store  
To chiefs and braves and sachems was disclosed,  
A wave of pleased approval swept the throng.  
Then motioned *Sieur La Salle* Ottonoway,  
Who handed him the signs of Indian craft,—  
A bow and arrows, and an axe of stone  
Together with the feathered calumet,  
And wampum belts within their snowwhite case;  
These each the leader took and laid them down



Before the chiefs, and placed the calumet  
Between the axe and bow, then from his gifts  
He took a shining axe blade and a gun,  
The metal on the stone he placed, the gun  
He laid across the Indian arrow sheaf,  
And from his pocket drew a crucifix  
And set it on the sacred calumet.  
Then lifting up the deerskin with its belts  
He drew them one by one as thus he spoke:  
"Know by these tokens our a mutual cause.  
The French and Indians are together bound  
By friendship's chain and claim of brotherhood;  
Our foes deploy along the eastern coast  
And westward where the Five Tribes hold the Lakes.  
On you and us they wage a hurtful war,  
And this demands of us confederate bond  
To meet and stay their thrusts of cruelty.  
Who can with you so ably fight the foe  
As soldiers trained within the camps of France?  
Their weapons shall with yours beat back the hordes  
Which threaten from the forest and the coast,  
So on these arms I place this wampum belt  
As pledge of our protecting hand of power.

Or who can so unlock the doors of trade  
And find the ready market for your furs  
And in return bring back the needed wares  
For camp and chase as traders of our race?  
So on the symbols of our common weal  
I lay this second wampum belt to pledge



An honest dealing with your western tribes.  
And who can bring the knowledge of the Truth  
And teach religion to your hungry hearts  
As these same priests who sit with you to-day?  
The heralds of the lifted cross are they,  
To bring good tidings to your villages  
And tell the way of life and peace to all.  
Upon the sacred cross and calumet,  
The holy symbols of our faith and aims,  
I lay another wampum belt in pledge  
Of our devoted interest in your tribes.  
And on this other pile of shining gifts  
I lay a belt expressing that good-will  
With which Onontio regards your race  
And wishes for each one prosperity.  
And binding thus the councils of this day  
I offer now this still more precious belt,  
A girdle from our king beyond the sea,  
On which is worked the sign of brotherhood,  
The French with Indian standing hand in hand  
And binding east with west in common cause  
Beneath the lilies of our monarch's flag.  
This token means that we make treaty here  
To stand united in confederate bond,  
And build a fort upon the castled Rock  
Near to the spot where we have pitched our camp.  
And from the fortress we may there erect,  
Our guns can safely keep the water way  
And guard your village and your valley fields  
Against the savage hordes of Iroquois,

And so insure the safety of your tribes.  
The terms accepted, belt and gifts are yours  
As pledges of the honor of New France."

Upon the faces of his auditors  
Approval showed, when rose a petty chief,  
Ugly with scars, arrayed in panther skins,  
The leader of a wild and vicious band.  
He had been found some twenty moons before  
Far up the windings of the Kankakee,  
Bound to a tree, by Iroquois, he claimed,  
And left, blood-smeared and gashed, a prey for wolves.  
A youth had led the Illinois to him,  
And when they had unbound his fastenings  
They gave him place among their chiefs, since he  
Displayed such hatred toward their enemies.  
He later from a hunting trip brought home  
A squaw and brood of children, and of these  
The maid, Neonee, like arbutus bud  
Among decaying leaves, bloomed into flower.

Now stood this chief before the circled throng,  
And through his half shut lids the listeners caught  
The steely glint of cold malignant eyes  
As fierce Monongonee harangued the crowd.  
"I am almost a stranger here" he said,  
"And yet in hate of Iroquois I yield  
To none, for I have yet a greater hate.  
The cause you know; I've felt their arrow stings,  
The piercings of their fiery pointed sticks.

But not the Iroquois alone are foes;  
The English, settling by the eastern seas,  
Are spoiling hunting ranges far inland;  
There is no room for us where they deploy.  
But not the English only are our foes;  
The French, with gracious words, gain ground and  
claim

The forests north and east, and they make friends  
With wily foes to gain their subtle ends,  
And smoke the calumet with Iroquois.  
And now with English masters and with French,  
Where does the native Indian's portion lie?  
Yet more, and hear me, for a forest bird  
Brought me this news but yesterday. It sang  
Deep in the wood while on the Illinois  
Canoes brought from Miami and Crevecour  
These companies of French. The wild bird sang:  
'My brother, there is cunning in the camp  
And there is craft upon the council floor,  
The calumet has lost its sacredness,  
They speak for peace whose hearts are primed for war.'  
I bent my head and listened for an hour,  
And then I heard the wild bird sing again:  
'My brother, he who speaks the gracious word  
And giveth goodly gifts to steal the heart  
Is leagued with those, thine ancient enemies,  
And 'neath the gift you'll find the fatal dart'."

With this Monongonee turned on La Salle  
And like a rattler poised with head erect,

And ready for the thrust of fatal stroke  
He hissed his vicious challenge to the Sieur,  
"You and your French have with the Iroquois  
Consorted to despoil our western tribes;  
You here invite to build a he-wolf's den  
On yonder Rock and from it take the prey.  
This day's grand feast, these gifts, your honeyed words,  
Are merely bait with which your trap is set,  
But it will now be sprung by those of us  
Who love our range and hate your wily ways.  
I call on you who would defend your homes  
To rouse and follow on the path of war."

On this with supple bound down from the mound  
He leaped, and swinging wide his tomahawk  
He raised the savage war cry while the crowd  
Like forest smitten by a sudden blast  
Bowed with the storm, and here and there a brave  
Rose up and joined their leader's howling din,  
But on the instant Sieur La Salle had stood  
And raising high his hand commanded, "Stay  
We have no other end in view than peace.  
Refuse to join with us and we will pass  
To other fields to bring about our ends,  
And leave you to the spoiling Iroquois.  
If with these ruthless foes at any time  
The French have smoked the sacred calumet  
It was to hold these cruel wolves in leash  
And not to pledge a share in taking prey.  
As for our words a trap which we delay

To spring? Even three times within this week  
Occasion has been ours were this our aim.  
Once when we came and found Kasakskia's braves  
Gone on the hunt we might have burned the town,  
And safely passed upon our errand's quest;  
The next day when unguarded round your spoils  
You lounged, we might have slain and made escape;  
And now to-day while you are resting safely here  
We might have blocked your exit with our guns  
And led you singly or in groups to death.  
Foul, vicious thought! the spawn of evil mind.  
For French and western tribes have kindred aim.  
Not soon shall we forget how bled our heart  
When we beheld scarce thirty moons ago  
Kaskaskia's homes despoiled by Iroquois,  
The scaffolds of her noble dead thrown down,  
Her warriors fled, her children tomahawked,  
Her ravished squaws left dying in their blood.  
Still beats our heart as with a brother's throb  
And we shall pray your foes come not again.  
And should you yet refuse to grant our boon  
We shall pass on to friends on other trails  
And simply say, 'Our brothers have forgot'."

Thus did the Sieur La Salle the storm allay  
And break the scarred chief's threat of vicious craft,  
Who seeing his mad counsels set at nought  
Passed with his henchmen from the cavern's mouth  
Along the shadowy trail toward the town.  
Long sat the chiefs and sachems on the mound

And smoked with Sieur La Salle the calumet,  
And with him signed the treaty's terms by which  
They gave him timbered acres on the bluffs  
And pledged their help to build at once a fort.  
Then in the glowing autumn afternoon  
The concourse broke and passed by woodland trail  
And water route to camps along the stream,  
And to Kaskaskia where their revels held  
Till midnight turned the tide of time toward day.  
Meantime Monongonee sulked in his lodge,  
And Sieur La Salle in camp beside the Rock,  
With leaders from Miami and Crevecour,  
Laid further plans for building soon the fort,  
And from the dizzy bluffs toward the west  
A great owl boomed his heavy sounding notes  
And in the cornfield moaned the whippoorwill.

## BOOK III.

### 1. THE FRONTIERSMEN

Heroic figures cast in molds of bronze  
Or deftly carved from the granite rock  
Bear witness to the conquering warrior's fame,  
The scholar's gifts, the skill of diplomat,  
The kindly favor of philanthropist,  
The noble act of valor or of love.  
For them who pay the sacrifice supreme  
In war, the arch and monument are built,  
While marble bust and tablet's honored rolls  
Preserve full oft the names of lesser men  
Whom chance or circumstance have raised to power.  
But what of them who in the common lot  
Made possible the stepping stones of fate  
By which a nation's fondlings climb to fame  
And after peoples live in opulence?  
Obscure, unfavored, they their toils pursued,  
They felled the forests with the ringing axe,  
They reared their cabins in the lonely woods,  
They plowed their clearings with the tedious share,  
They reaped their harvests with the sickle's thrust,  
They waged their season's battle with the snows  
And with the wintry wind's unequal strife,  
They fought the redmen in the ambushed wood,  
And drove the wild beasts from the barn and fold.



With axe and gun in hand for ready use  
They kept the fort and held their humble homes.

For them the gates of classic lore were shut  
Save as some learned priest or leader came  
And sat beside their fire and passed to them  
The wisdom gleaned in schools across the sea.  
Their teachers were the storms which swept the hills,  
The forests giving of their secret lore,  
The birds and beasts that ranged the virgin wilds,  
The rivers and the streams which drained their lands,  
The lonely mountains with their snowy wastes,  
The moon and stars, mute guardians of the night,  
And Seasons shifting with the changing year.  
The sum of all instruction was to learn  
How sustenance and safety might be found,  
How frame their shelters 'gainst the piercing winds,  
And find protection from the savages,  
How gain a living from the soil and woods  
And harmonize their lives with nature's laws.  
This schooling in the vast and open wilds  
Made men resourceful, brave, and confident,  
Like heroes of the classic age who fought  
With dragons and with hydra-headed beasts.  
It gave them prowess to withstand attack,  
And, daring fate, they feared no foe, but stood,  
Defiant to each danger threatening them,  
And forced the conflict to the final blow.  
Such heritage they left that even yet  
The lands they tilled, the restless lakes they sailed,



The rugged mountains that they climbed, all claim  
The attributes of greatness each possessed,  
And these they linked with forest, rock, and stream,  
And wrote their names on rivers, hills, and towns.

## 2. THE BUILDING OF THE FORT

November's leaden dome above the Rock  
Was arched in ashen gray magnificence  
When first the sound of woodman's axe was heard  
Among the forests of the Illinois,  
Preparing for the building of the fort.  
The Rock gave up in part its plume-like pine,  
Its maple and its oak and other growth,  
And near the northern edge a pit was dug  
To serve as cellar; while with measuring stick  
La Salle, colossus-like, bestrode the logs.

A booth like structure built in sheltered nook  
Upon the lofty promontory's crest,  
Held in it safely implements and stores  
Brought down from Fort Miami on the Lake.  
Here, too, Chapelle plied happily his art  
Among the pans and kettles, kept supplied  
By heaps of game Ottonoway brought in  
From river, forest, thicket, swamp and plain.  
The crowd of Indian loungers grew around  
This favored spot until La Salle decreed  
That only they who worked should share the food.  
Then part retired and at his beck and call

The rest employed themselves in varied tasks;  
Some found the wiry sedge grass in the swamps  
And wove it with the inner strands of bark  
To form the long and pliant ropes they used  
To draw the timbers up the steep Rock's side.  
Some also found and cut the wild grape vines  
In lengths convenient for the needful use,  
And others piled great stacks of fuel high  
Upon the summit for the winter fires,  
While some brought in wild rice, cornmeal, and nuts  
And bartered such for hatchets, knives or guns.  
These workers were supplied their shares of food,  
And round the cheerful fire high o'er the stream  
The French begat good-will and brotherhood.

Meantime the axemen round the high Rock's base  
Cut down the destined trees, lopped off the limbs,  
And squared the trunks to suit the plans devised.  
Strong slabs were split from straight grained logs of  
oak,  
And with the drawing-knife and plane were smoothed  
To serve as doors and window frames and sills.  
The chorus of the broad-axe, saw and adze  
Was merged with heavy throbings of the maul,  
And rocky ledges gave their echoes back.  
The jays, disturbed, screamed protests shrill and sharp,  
The brown owls looked with wonder on the scene,  
And from their home within a hollow oak  
A pair of ringed raccoons watched warily,  
While reynard with his bright and cunning eyes

Peered out surprised from hazel's tangled maze  
High up the ledge across the nearby stream,  
Then like a shadow slipped away in stealth.

While thus the forests bowed before the axe  
The cliffs gave up their secrets to the men,  
Who found upon a neighboring bluff, the pine  
In which a pair of eagles had their nest  
Where every year they reared their callow young;  
The lofty height was christened Eagle Rock.  
Still further east where 'gainst a dizzy wall  
A canyon ended sharp amongst the rocks,  
A hunter trailed a wild cat to her den,  
And had he not with skillful shot laid low  
The fierce-eyed mother, crouching for her spring,  
His hunt might have had issue otherwise,  
But as it was, he brought her furry pelt  
And tiny spitting kittens to the fort,  
And left the wild cat's name to mark the gorge.

Meantime the cellar-pit was dug complete,  
Its edges leveled to receive the logs  
First to be laid in place, and on a day  
Appointed by La Salle, an eager crowd  
Of French and Indians drew with ropes and skids  
Two poplar beams from where the parent trees  
Were felled and squared upon the valley floor;  
Each measured four score feet and reached entire  
The fort's long length, a little space apart,  
And passed, projecting from the high Rock's edge,

Full seven yards, and these they later braced  
By lesser beams against the Rock's steep side,  
And laid a floor and built a balustrade,  
And drumlike windlass, whence in case of siege  
They might draw water from the depths below.  
Then log by log the walls were hastily reared,  
The bracing beams pinned firmly in their place,  
The timbers sawed for entrance ways and light,  
The chinking closely packed between the logs  
And port-holes bored within the upper room.  
The sheeting on the rafters overhead  
Received the rows of white oak shingles wide;  
Two chimneys, one at either end, were built  
And set with cranes firm fastened in their walls;  
The cellar pit was covered with huge slabs  
And on the other floor space sawed blocks set  
With evened tops like stretch of paving brick.  
The northern corners west and east were flanked  
By towers where were placed two cannon brought  
From Fort Miami with the other stores  
And set to guard the river and the fields.

Upon a chill December day while stood  
An Indian throng upon the farther shore,  
Invited from La Vantum for the sight,  
The cannon boomed, their white smoke rolling high,  
As Sieur La Salle ran up the flag of France,  
And heavy voices sang *Te Deum's* praise.  
Soon all his stores were housed within the fort  
And all prepared against the searching cold.

And in the last fair days that lingered still  
About the Rock before the winter came,  
The Sieur La Salle a palisade ran round  
The edges where a foe might scale the height,  
And built a well-defended entrance way  
Which faced the south, with timbered stairs below.

So hasted by the days till Christmas Eve  
Her curtain gathered round the fort-crowned Rock,  
And lit the tallow candles on the tree  
Which brushed the ceiling of the fort's wide room.  
Here in the light and warmth which cheered the spot  
The lonely blazers of the forest trails  
Renewed the age-old spirit of good will.  
Jacques D'Autray from his private chest fished out  
An ancient flute and with the violin  
Chapelle so often tuned as evening fell  
The two beguiled the swiftly speeding hours,  
And played the strains they'd learned beyond the seas  
When love and budding manhood marked their youth.  
Glad gala days in France arose in mind  
As they from pipe and string drew melody.  
And with the cheer that filled the joyous hours  
Old quarrels were forgot, estrangements healed,  
And ruffled feelings smoothed to peace again.  
Here far from home and kindred in the woods  
Their lonely spirits trod the paths of youth  
And they were boys once more as in the past,  
Delighting in the simple gifts exchanged  
Around the shining tree:—strange gifts they were,

A much prized nugget wrapped in linden leaf,  
A hunting knife encased in bison hide,  
A polished horn to keep the precious store  
Of powder dry, a hatchet, or a trap.  
Chapelle, true to his craft, had furnished sweets  
Encroaching on his maple sugar stock,  
And with dried myrrh or pinch of wintergreen  
Or peppermint had flavored well his stores.

La Salle had bidden in to share this scene  
A group of chiefs, and gave to each of them  
Some token of the season's happy cheer,—  
A feathered pipe, a shining string of beads,  
A handy axe, or present of such sort.  
Within the genial warmth of hearthstone flames,  
With copious stores of food and drink bestowed,  
Their wintry natures thawed to give response  
And iced reserve broke into cordial glow.  
So fled the evening hours within the fort  
Till midnight passing by the dizzy Rock  
Saw still the fires alight and heard the songs  
Sung gaily in the language of the French.  
And when the sharers of the Christmas cheer  
Looked out across the valley fields next morn,  
The earth was ermined by a fall of snow  
And winter stalked among Kaskaskia's huts  
And spread her royal robes upon the hills.

### 3. D'AUTRAY'S TALE

A storm was raging on La Vantum's hills,  
White-breathed and furious it drove the sleet

Among the trees and shot its bolts of ice  
Against the walls of cliff, and spread its sheets  
Of shifting snow upon the valley floor,  
Then rudely caught them up in savage mood  
And fiercely flung them to the clearing's edge.  
The winds roared madly round the low-eaved fort,  
And leaped like howling giants from the Rock,  
And bellowed wildly as they raced away  
Amongst the lonely, hollow-moaning glens.

Within the roomy fort a blazing fire,  
Responding hotly to each gusty swell  
That wrenched at beam and rafter till they creaked,  
Roared lusty challenge to the winds outside.  
Around the mud-chinked walls were tiers of bunks  
On which were spread the pelts of buffalo  
And bear. Above the fireplace and the doors  
The guns and gear of chase and war were hung,  
And fitful firelight showed on peg and nail  
Rough garments, needful tools and implements,  
And from the ceiling haunches of the deer.  
Across the central space a table stretched  
With slab seats ranged about its grateful edge,  
And here before the roaring fire there lounged  
On stools and rustic chairs or sprawled at length  
On deerskins spread upon the puncheon floor  
The hardy trailers of the northern paths.  
They told their oft repeated stories of the past,  
Wild tales of fierce encounter in the wood  
With savage bear bereft of cubs; of lynx,



And wild cat and the wounded deer or elk;  
Of wolves withstood till dawn bestreaked the sky  
And they retired like silent shadows gray.

Among these men who lounged before the fire,  
The Sieur La Salle sat at the table's end,  
And over notes and outspread map he pored  
In concentration lost to all about  
Yet conscious of the tide of eddying speech.  
Near by sat D'Autray, silent as his wont,  
Who only talked when mood within was stirred.  
His was a poet's nature, leagued with stars,  
And sunsets, storms, and mountain solitudes,  
And these sometimes unloosed his silent tongue  
When his companions of the forest felt  
He had come down from heights unknown to them,  
And while but dimly they divined his moods  
They gave him quiet reverence as their peer.  
Each in that circle knew that years before  
A tragedy had pierced him with its shaft,  
But from his lips none save La Salle had heard  
The moving story of that tragic past.  
He now sat by and listened to his friends  
Relate their stories of the northern woods,  
And as he listened twirled a tomahawk  
With handle marked by many a rude scratched notch.  
At length the tongues became less talkative  
Like fires upon the hearth which cease to burn  
With brighter glow from having fed upon  
The fuel given to their ravening flames.



Meanwhile the angry surgings of the storm  
Beat yet more madly round the low-eaved fort,  
And lashed the forest till it groaned in pain,  
And flung its broken limbs as hostages  
To stay the onward sweeping tide of wrath.  
The roof and rafters creaked, and hollow roared  
The fire within the massive chimney's throat.  
Then D'Autray stirred, as though the boisterous night  
Claimed speech from him, and said, "'Twas such a  
storm

Which fifteen years ago broke on the hills  
Along the Richelieu, and marked its course  
With prostrate pines and rudely shattered trunks.  
It came upon the wake of days as fair  
As any ever dawning in late fall,  
Days like the times I'd known two years before  
At Montreal's fur sale when Indians came  
In loaded boats to meet the merchants there  
And carry back the varied wares of trade.  
There first I met the daughter of a chief,  
A girl as graceful as the bounding fawn  
Which plays around the grazing herd at eve.  
I urged my suit and with her people went  
Far up along the pine fringed Ottawa,  
And spent the autumn in the Huron town  
Where Chief Lacolac ruled his chastened braves.  
I helped them fortify their villages,  
And hunted through the forests by their side.

"When snows were gone, I launched a birch canoe

And in it brought away my Indian wife.  
We came to Montreal and later passed  
To home-like spot along the piny shore  
And built our cabin by the Richelieu.  
More golden than the golden summer days  
Those happy months beside the river's marge.  
My bride was not as other women were  
Among her tribe. Gentle she was and bright,  
With laughter in her voice, like bluebird's note,  
And eyes that shone like stars in shadowy streams.  
And when a little life that winter came  
To cheer our lonely forest habitat,  
The great deep of my spirit stirred and voiced  
Its answer to the mystery of life,  
And I was mute with prayer of gratitude  
And said, 'My cup is full to overflow.'  
Through all that winter and the passing spring  
And summer I was like to them that dream;  
I read new meanings with the eyes of love,  
New stores of joy in all about my home;  
My little child with baby fingers drew  
Fresh fancies from the stars and heaven's deep,  
And in the whispers of the wood I heard  
The luring calls from far enchanted shores.

"So passed the days, and with the autumn time  
I loaded full my birch canoe with furs,  
And left for Montreal, a three days' trip.  
As I returned a storm broke on the hills,  
And golden light was quenched, and night came down

With shadows and the howling of the wind.  
The last lap up the white-capped Richelieu  
Was fought against the fury of the gale,  
And in the blinding swirls of chilling sleet  
I brought my vessel to its mooring-place  
And staggered up the shore toward my home.  
No grateful firelight glowed upon the hearth,  
Nor shout of childish welcome greeted me;  
The door stood wide and silence everywhere,  
Save as the storm gave answer to my calls.  
In fear I struck the flint that gave me light,  
And lying there in blood upon the floor  
My woodland wife with her dark eyes aglaze  
Looked through the gloom the stony glare of death,  
A scalp wound gaping through her raven locks.  
With deep despairing moan of agony  
I caught her cold dead form and held it fast,  
It may have been for hours for aught I know,  
In my wild grief, while with increasing wrath  
The storm outside grew in intensity,  
The fit accompaniment of storm within.  
And as it raged and lashed and broke the trees  
I madly raved and cursed the Iroquois  
Whose fiendish work I knew it must have been  
That had despoiled my forest paradise.

"At length bespent I laid the body down,  
And kindled on the hearth again the fire.  
My child was gone, the only trace save death  
The foe had left of presence in my home

Was this same tomahawk which doubtless slipped  
From fast'ning in the brutal Indian's belt  
When he had stooped to catch my partridge chick.  
I gripped it hard and wildly raved again;  
So through the night until the storm was spent  
My savage nature often burst restraint;  
But not in howlings of the tempest blast  
Nor in the wild bemoanings of my breast  
Was any peace or quiet to be found.  
'Twas only when the gale was fully spent  
And break of day showed nature's miracle,  
The calm that follows in the wake of storm,  
I heard the still small voice of God proclaim,  
'The vengeance for the deed belongs to me.'  
Then through my mind old laws from Holy Writ  
Came trooping with retributory threat  
And claimed me as avenger of my wrongs:  
'An eye for eye avenge, a tooth for tooth,  
Who sheds man's blood, man's hand shall shed his  
blood,  
Who lifts the sword shall by the sword be slain,  
As Israel did, thou also shalt avenge.'  
But ever to such inner reasoning  
The voice of Deity through conscience spoke,  
'Be still, be still, and know that I am God,  
For vengeance unto me alone belongs.'  
At length I paused and listening I learned,  
And as a weaned child that's comforted  
I've stilled my heart and waited through the years,  
For though I dare not lift avenging hand

If yet has seemed to me my eyes shall see  
The vindication of this hellish wrong.  
So sure it hath appeared I've written here,  
\*'Sui a tue' on le tuera par ca'."  
With this he held his slender tomahawk  
So that the firelight fell upon the blade,  
And Sieur La Salle read to the group again  
The legend graven in their native tongue.

A hush had fallen on the company  
As though above the deed a mightier power  
That silent worked through time were sensed by them.  
But now that D'Autray's voice no longer spoke,  
The spell was broken and the men gave vent  
To words of hate, the index of their time,  
As they reviewed his sad experience.  
One said he should have raised a company  
Among the men along the Richelieu  
And followed hard upon his foeman's trail  
And giv'n no respite till he'd found and slain  
The last man of the ranging murderous band.  
Another counseled that he should have watched  
The waterways and spent his days alert  
In taking toll on roving Iroquois,  
While others urged surprise or night attack,  
The hand of flame, the poisoning of the springs,  
Or some such fatal thrust of vengeful hate.

To these the high-souled D'Autray made reply:

\*He who has slain by this shall he be slain—Liberal translation.

“Let those who may with slaughter stain their hands,  
I dare not dye my own with vengeful blood.  
With friends I will defend the camp and home  
Against the ruthless men of blood who rise,  
But will not urge a personal war nor strife,  
For no man dares to let the hordes of hate  
Run rampant through his breast unless he place  
His soul at hazard with all chance to lose,  
And he who takes the sword by it shall die.  
Stand still and see the wheels of circumstance  
Turn round, for on them it is plainly writ,  
‘To God belongeth vengeance for all deeds.’  
Beyond the ken of puny finite men  
Are potent laws that rule the universe,  
Its morals and its vast machinery,  
And no man safely runs a counter course,  
For hate will surely wreck the vengeful soul.”

“Well,” said a friend who’d urged reprisal’s means,  
“Give me your tomahawk, we’ll hang it here  
And wait the proof you feel is sure to come,—  
The chance for it is but the hope to find  
A needle lost within a stack of hay.”  
He reached his hand and took the shining blade  
And hung it just above the chimney-shelf,  
Then as the evening deepened, one by one  
The men retired and soon were lost in sleep,  
And only *Sieur La Salle* with map and notes  
Kept vigil in the lonely wind-wracked fort.

## 4. MONONGONEE

A sentry on the lofty wind-swept Rock  
Looked down the valley toward Kaskaskia's huts  
And saw an Indian coming up the trail.  
He moved with easy grace along the path  
Among the shadows blue below the cliffs;  
A furry blanket wrapped the supple form  
Which showed the strength of sinewy catamount,  
And something in the savage's advance  
Struck off the thought within the sentry's mind,  
"The way yon Indian moves along the path  
Shows he's more panther than he is a man."  
The Redman on his part, as though he knew  
The quarry which he meant to stalk, approached  
The Rock and took the pathway to the fort  
And climbed the steep ascent and shortly stood  
Before the entrance to the guarded ground.  
Among the natives who had thronged the place  
In recent weeks and helped to build the fort,  
This one had not been present. Now he peered  
Within the heavy door and stealthily  
Looked on the scene,—the fort and palisade,  
As though he saw not, yet saw everything.

The guard with one alert apprizing glance  
Had recognized him as the chief who late  
Had sought to break the Council at the Cave.  
The Indian sensing his disfavor said:  
"I am Monongonee and wish to see



The Sieur La Salle." Then stood erect in pride  
And waited for an answer to his words.  
The sentry sought La Salle and brought reply  
The Sieur would see his guest within the fort,  
And hither passed the chief with catlike tread.  
La Salle arose to greet his visitor  
Who lately parted from him as a foe,  
And bowed, reserved, a welcome to his guest,  
The other, watching as with adder's eyes,  
Gave neither bow nor gesture while he spoke  
In measured terms of suave apology:  
"I bring regrets for insult lately given,  
I thought you friendly to the Iroquois,  
But fort and palisade disprove the thought.  
Accept my words and with me share good will."

Before the wily statement of his guest  
The features of La Salle at once relaxed;  
With friendly grace he reached forgiving hand  
And grasped the subtle Indian's but to find  
In cold response and black averted look  
The empty meaning to his studied words.  
"It is his pride," he thought, "we'll let it go."  
And straightway motioned him to occupy  
The fireside circle's highly honored seat,—  
A great chair covered with a bison's hide.  
The Indian deigned no answer but to lift  
The skin and spread it on the floor, then said,  
"Earth is my mother and with her I rest."  
So saying, he sat down and looked around



Through narrowed lids on what was ranged about,—  
The firewood, tables, bunks, and piles of furs,  
The tools and implements and drying venison,  
The gear and garments hanging on their pegs,  
And all the varied stores of trapper's craft.  
His furtive gaze drank in most greedily  
The weapons of defense,—the cannon brought  
From Fort Miami ere the fall of snow,  
And several rifles of prodigious length  
To swell the Rock's foreboding armory.  
He saw the tomahawk above the hearth  
Where it had hung since D'Autray told his tale  
The night the storm had raged around the Rock,  
And as the Indian gazed upon the blade  
La Salle beheld his countenance light up,  
And oft the Redman cast a covert glance  
Toward the chimney wall, and when he left  
He asked the weapon might be given him,  
But vouched no reason for his frank request.

And *Sieur La Salle* had made reply to him:  
The owner of the tomahawk was gone  
To *Crevecour* with important mission charged,  
So he could not make gift as asked the chief,  
But other present might bestow in place.  
And this the proud *Monongonee* received  
And when he left the fort his cold reserve  
Seemed broken, but beneath this outer guise  
His Indian nature schemed with subtlety  
And bided time in which to work his will.

And when Sieur D'Autray had returned again  
La Salle informed him of the incident  
And bade him keep his weapon under lock  
If he regarded it of special worth,  
But D'Autray answered, "Kismet: let it stay;  
We'll watch the wheels of circumstance turn round."

## BOOK IV.

### 1. THEIR HOMELY JOYS

The harsh pursuits of hardy pioneers  
Who waged their warfare with the wilderness  
Forbade the play of superficial life.  
For these stout hearts the wood and field required  
Continuous conflict with wild nature's power.  
Their path was traced through shadowy forest wastes  
Where death lay crouching in a hundred forms,—  
In fateful issues of the hunter's quest,  
The stroke of bear, the spring of catamount,  
The thrust of wounded deer or bleeding elk  
The covert trail of cruel timber wolves,  
And yet more stealthy move of Indian foe.  
With falling limb and blinding winter storm  
And treacherous passage of the water ways  
They kept a constant rendezvous with death.

For them the unremitting toils of life  
Gave little time for aught save livelihood;  
The forest bowed before the flashing axe,  
The lowly cabin in the clearing rose,  
The log and brush heap filled the wood with smoke,  
The gashing plowshare gored the rootbound soil,  
The hopeful seed was flung from tiller's hand,

The harvest yielded to the sickle's thrust,  
And toil and patience reaped their scant reward.  
Small wonder then their homely joys were found  
In pleasures of the rough and wilder sort,  
In tests of virile strength and match of skill  
With axe and firearms and the swift canoe.  
The dangers of the wood and rapid stream  
Gave constant challenge to their daring souls,  
The wounded bear they followed to the cave,  
They trailed the mountain lion through the pine,  
They stalked the panther in his rocky lair,  
And held the hungry timber wolves at bay.  
On crest of spumy waves they drove their barks  
Among the rocks which churned the rapid's flow,  
And fought their foemen in their native haunt  
With skill surpassing e'en the Redman's craft.

Their festal days were spent in tests of strength,  
In brutal bouts and orgies wild carouse;  
The ruder elements awoke within  
The chord responsive to the savage strain,  
And bestial bedlam ruled their feasts and games.  
And if to these were joined the Indian sports  
And race with race were intermingled close,  
The play of passion broke restraining bounds  
And found expression in the ways of sin,  
And oft the hidden fires of smoldering feuds  
Burst angrily again to lurid flame.  
Or if the Redman kept a separate course  
And found his pleasure only with his race,

The customs born of strange and cruel rites  
Came crowding from the superstitious past  
And introduced themselves in festal scenes.  
Like tides which draw their swelling strength from far  
And unrestrained spread their waters wide,  
So from the dark unfathomed surge of time  
The revelers drew the meanings of their rites  
And cast religion in a mystic mold,  
And peopled nature with a spirit host.  
The winters of the north held life in leash,  
Like helpless brooks by icy fetters bound,  
And forests in their smothering shrouds of snow;  
But with the coming of the spring the leash  
Was slipped, the brook became a surging flood,  
And woodlands waked to joyous pulsing song.

## 2. TONTI'S MISSION

No sooner had the low-eaved fort been reared  
Upon the Rock above the Illinois,  
Than Sieur La Salle devised a festal day  
On which to celebrate its opening,  
And timed it with the coming of the spring.  
And that the tribes through all the wide Northwest  
Might share the triumph of the great event  
He planned to send a worthy messenger  
With invitation to the native camps.  
Too much reserved his good friend D'Autray seemed,  
So he was sent to Crevecour to take charge  
And thus free Tonti for the journey's task.

The snow lay deep upon the valley floor  
And ice had bound the river's sluggish flow  
When Tonti made appearance at the fort.  
He spent long hours each day o'er maps and notes  
With Sieur La Salle until the route was traced,  
And all details prepared for wintry trip,  
Then with Ottonoway he left the Rock  
And took the long trail to the distant tribes.  
They drew a narrow sledge on which were stored  
Their blankets, snowshoes, skillet, axe and guns,  
Jerked meat, a bag of grain, and varied gifts  
Designed for chiefs and sachems on the route.  
Each carried at his side against surprise  
A pistol; Tonti also wore his sword.  
Accoutred thus the two scouts quit the fort  
And started on the snowy trail that ran  
The circuit of the scattered Indian camps.  
They went far north by way of Maramech,  
And through the forests to Wisconsin's Fox,  
And westward to the Mississippi's shore,  
Then southward on their zigzag course they wound  
Until beside the Ohio's limpid flood  
They turned their steps toward the Rock again.  
Two moons waxed full and waned before their trip  
Was ended and they climbed the timbered stairs  
And gave report of all their wanderings,—  
What sights they saw, what ventures they passed  
through,  
And how they were received among the tribes.

They told how on the start a storm had struck  
Their trail whilst they were far from lodge or hut,  
And sensing danger speedily they made  
At once rude shelter where the wind had piled  
The trees the year before in tangled mass,  
With trunk on trunk and interlacing limbs,  
And here upon the leeward side they leaned  
Birch poles and covered them with balsam boughs,  
And filled the sheltered space beneath with leaves,  
And built a fire against the nearby logs.  
Then crawling underneath their piny roof,  
They waited till the storm swept by and calm  
Came once again among the lonely trees,  
When they crept forth and broke anew the trail.

One cloudy afternoon along the Fox,  
They heard the long drawn howl of timber wolves  
And knew the hungry pack was on their trail,  
But steadily they pushed ahead and slept  
Between two blazing fires that night and saw  
Betimes when rising to renew the flames,  
The shining eyes which glared from covert haunt;  
But with the earliest streakings of the dawn  
The pack dissolved like creatures of a dream.

In snowbound villages beyond the Fox  
They found the symbols of the Jesuit faith,—  
The tree-formed cross on which were hung dyed skins,  
Red girdles, bows and arrows,—offerings  
Which showed the promptings of the Indian heart,  
And how the wild Mascoutin sought his peace.

Amongst Ojibway wigwams further north  
The winter held the braves in thrall, and here  
The inmates gambled with the cherry stones,  
And only quit the game when spoils were gone  
And luckless players parted with their garb.  
Here, too, they found despondent and forlorn,  
A broken remnant of the Huron tribe,  
Half-starved, a prey to dread and haunting fears,  
And shivering in their lonely lodges lest  
The prowling Iroquois with murderous hands  
Should burst upon the hapless camp again.  
From these Ottonoway and Tonti heard  
Such tales of torture that the hot blood chilled,  
And even the sombre listening hemlocks moaned  
In sympathy above the fireside group.

In all these haunts amongst the northern tribes  
The visitors were graciously received;  
The caches where the maize was stored gave up  
A copious yield. The odorous kettles steamed  
As feasts of dog and bear meat were prepared  
In honor of the guests who bore the tribes  
The invitation for the festal day  
Arranged to mark the opening of the fort.

So crossing frozen swamps where wild rice stalks  
With frayed blades fluttered in the biting wind,  
Ottonoway and Tonti gained the huts  
Where dwelt the hostile Sioux, and here they found  
The warriors holding council to prepare



For bloody conquest 'gainst the neighboring tribes  
With budding of the mandrakes in the groves.  
But as these heard their guests relate the plans  
For celebration on the Illinois  
To ratify the great confederate pact,  
They modified their counsels speedily,  
That they might mingle in the grand event,  
And chief and sachem promised they would send  
The news to reach the others of their tribe.

Then southward through the villages that lay  
Along the Colbert's shores, the messengers  
Passed down until beyond the fettering ice  
They saw the waters glisten in the sun,  
And roll away in wide majestic sweep  
To melt upon the mild horizon's rim.  
Here bartering for a stout canoe they passed  
From tribe to tribe, and ever as they held  
The calumet aloft and told their tale  
The Redmen gave a welcome to their guests.

Thus to the lodges where Peoria's tribe  
Was domiciled they made their way, and ate  
Their steaks of catfish baked on heated stones,  
And told their story of the late-built fort  
And celebrating day to crown the work.  
They passed to where the crystal river's flow  
Was merged with dark Des Moines, and Kickapoos  
And wild Maroas built their villages,  
Then by the Alton cliffs upon whose face

Strange creatures of a hideous shape were drawn,—  
Crude deities to guard the flowing tide.  
And so to scenes near by the tawny surge  
Of mad Missouri's flood, where Kansa dwelt  
With Mahas, Pawnees, and Osages bold.  
The round of generous feasts again was shared,  
Once more the story told of fort-crowned Rock  
And coming festal day, and once again  
Their hosts expressed goodwill, and favor showed  
In happy dancing of the calumet.

At length their southbound craft crept round the point  
Where fair Ohio's wealth of waters merged  
With turgid flow of Colbert's massive flood,  
And skirting by the river's willowy fringe  
They reached the tepees of the Shawnee tribe.  
Here as the harbingers of spring they heard  
The bluebird and the robin sing, and saw  
The wild geese wedging northward in the blue.  
Before their guests the squaws set stores of sweets,  
Fresh made among the dripping maple groves.  
Here told again the visitors their tale  
Of fort erected on the northern Rock  
And gala muster planned to celebrate.

Among the warlike Pottawattamies  
They next found lodgment where the Wabash flows,  
As they passed northward on their homebound course.  
With these they ate the parched corn and samp,  
And drank the blood-red sassafras from bowls

Their hosts set steaming by them on the ground.  
They crossed the portage to the Kankakee,  
And drifting down the current paused brief while  
Among Miami camps, retold their tale,  
And smoked the pipe of peace, and on a day  
When sun was wed to earth in spring's first rites,  
They passed upon the swollen Illinois  
Below the guardian cliffs which lined their course,  
And 'mongst the green-fringed islands of the stream,  
They saw afar the liliated flag bestir  
Above the gray roof of the rock-perched fort,  
And drifting round the mossed and lichened base,  
They tied their craft and climbed the timbered stairs  
To find a royal welcome on the crest.

### 3. THE OPENING OF THE FORT

The Judas trees were blooming on the bluffs,  
And plums were spreading tents of snowy white  
Among the islands of the Illinois,  
When once again as at the rally held  
In Council Cave the river teemed with craft  
Which brought the tribes from still a wider range.  
Again Kaskaskia's huts to overflow  
Were filled by tribesmen sensing new designs;  
Again the smoke of many camps perfumed  
The woods and curled above the drowsy fires.

This time the streams of Indian life converged  
Upon the level top of Eagle Cliff,

For here La Salle had caused his men to make  
Provision for the comfort of the tribes  
Which gathered for the opening of the fort.  
Five thousand warriors from the nearby camps,  
And from among the tribes where Tonti passed,  
Assembled for the great triumphal day.  
Kaskaskia's scant reserves of food, and all  
That might be gathered from the plain and wood,  
Or taken from the river's fertile breast,  
Were stored to meet the needs of hungry guests  
Who came the long trails from the distant camps.  
Abundant piles of wood were massed for fires,  
And temporary lodges crowned the cliffs  
And all made ready for the gala day.  
A running track had on the level ground  
Been cleared for tests of speed. A longer course  
Was also marked which ran by cliff and stream,  
And scaled the bluffs by seeming trackless paths,  
So steep and narrow was the route at times.

A cannon boomed at morning's earliest flush;  
Its echoes answered from the encircling hills,  
And life bestirred within the waking woods,  
Along the shores, and on the river's breast.  
The great chiefs of the near and distant tribes  
Came ere the sun was risen two hours high,  
And passed within the entrance to the fort  
Where Sieur La Salle and others of his aides,  
In courtly garb gave welcome to the throng.  
Again, as at the Cave, with princely hand

He lavished gifts upon the tribal heads,—  
A score of guns, and hatchets for their needs  
He gave with beads, cloth, shirts, and hunting knives,  
And gilded trinkets from the shops of France  
Brought here by toilsome labor from Quebec.  
Then as the chiefs reclined beneath the trees,  
And smoked complacently their pipes supplied  
With liberal grants from his tobacco store,  
La Salle harangued his solemn visaged guests:  
“This hour bodes well, my Brothers of the West,  
For us in formal conclave met to-day.  
In keeping with the promise which I made  
But few short months ago, you see this fort  
Erected as the seal of our good faith.  
To-day we celebrate its opening  
And dedicate it to our mutual weal;  
Here are the towers whose guns command yon stream,  
And pledge protection to your fields and homes;  
Here other structures soon will grace this Rock,  
Receive your furs and give a fair exchange;  
Here floats the flag of France whose lilied folds  
Assure the safety of the weakest tribe;  
Here you have gathered from afar and near  
To pledge allegiance in the common cause,  
And from this spot good-will and brotherhood  
Shall emanate from tribe to tribe as far  
As Colbert and his rivers drain the land.  
Take, then, these guns and use them in the chase,  
And for protection of your forest homes,  
But never in the fratricidal fray;

And with these hatchets make you scaffolds firm  
Against the winds to hold your honored dead,  
And to confirm your confidence in us  
I pledge in turn with these the faith of France."

So saying he two costly wampum belts  
Held up and passed to right and left, then lit  
His treasured calumet and handed it  
From chief to chief. Thus on the fort crowned Rock  
The bond of fealty was ratified.  
Whilst thus engaged a band of black-robed priests  
*Te Deum* sang with lusty voices clear,  
Which rang above the peaceful Illinois,  
And stilled the thousands gathered on the stream,  
The further bank, and all about the rim  
Of wooded bluffs toward the east and south.  
Then on the signal from the Sieur La Salle  
The great guns of the fort boomed thunderously,  
The liliated banner of old France was run  
Above the eastern tower, and lower down  
A string of pennants passed from tower to tower,  
Each bearing on its face the totem sign  
Of one or other of the assembled tribes,  
And thus designed to grace the river front  
And give the chiefs surprise. Then underneath  
The floating banner stood the Sieur La Salle  
And said as on his gesture rose the throng:  
"By virtue of the power of our Great Prince,  
The mighty and most high Louis Fourteenth,  
Invincible, victorious King of France,

Who by the grace of God reigns over seas,  
And holds this continent by rightful sway,  
I, on this first of May, and in the year  
Of sixteen hundred eighty three, A. D.,  
By right of my commission signed by him,  
Our most puissant King, do hereby name  
This post in honor of His Majesty  
Fort St. Louis, and take possession here,  
For him and his successors to the crown,  
Of this domain and all the nations, tribes,  
Towns, cities, villages, resources, woods,  
Mines, minerals, within the boundaries  
Drained by the Colbert and his streams.  
And being first of European powers  
To visit in these virgin wilds we hold  
The right of the discoverer to claim  
These lands in honor of our noble King.  
And since accorded to the Crown by tribes  
In solemn council met we will protest  
All who attempt invasion of these realms.  
Of this and all made needful by our pledge  
We take our oath beneath the flag of France."

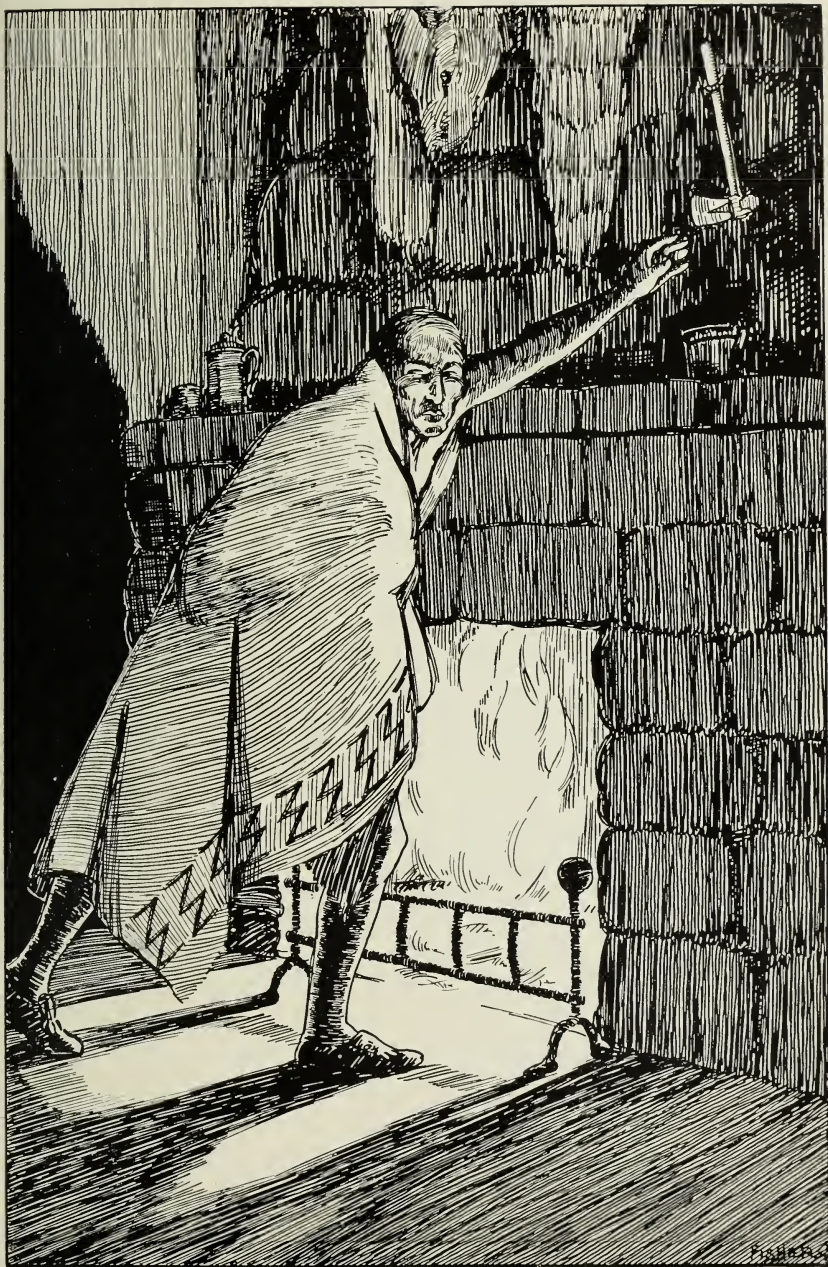
On this the muskets' volleyed concert broke  
The stillness reigning for the formal hour,  
And once again the thundrous cannon boomed,  
And all the thousands on the circling bluffs,  
The river and the farther shore, sent up  
A ringing shout which echoed from the hills.  
Then heartily the black-robed priests sang clear



*Vexilla Regis* on the scented air,  
And so they dedicated Rock and Fort.  
This ceremony at an end, La Salle  
Extended invitation to the chiefs  
To view the fort within, and led the way  
Where they might see his start of enterprise,—  
His store of goods and stacks of valued pelts,  
The earnest of success in future trade.  
Monongonee with others moved about,  
And while at length before the fort La Salle  
Discoursed on further projects he devised,  
The chieftain lingered in the room within  
And longing gazed upon the tomahawk  
Still resting high above the hearth as hung  
That gusty night when D'Au-tray told his tale.  
Alone at last he reached with stealthy hand  
To draw the weapon 'neath his blanket's fold,  
When Tonti in the door behind appeared.  
The Indian stayed his hand and through strained lids  
He flashed his hate and said, "I wished to see."  
And Tonti looking squarely at the chief  
Remarked with dryness, "Yes, one sees it best  
While holding it," where on the chief strode out  
And Tonti took the weapon for the time  
And locked it safely in his steel-bound chest,  
And gave the sentry orders to observe  
Who came and went thereafter through the room.

Beneath the trees upon the gray Rock's crest  
La Salle next gave his guests abundant feast,





ALONE AT LAST HE REACHED WITH STEALTHY HAND



Then all passed down and crossed to Eagle Cliff.  
Here festive kettles steamed above the fires,  
Attended by a throng of stolid squaws  
Whose yelling children raced beneath the trees,  
And 'mongst the groups of warriors lounging there.  
Through this thick swarming mass of life La Salle  
Passed with the chiefs and gained the late cleared  
ground

Where in the course of time the games were called.  
Here in the tests of speed Ottonoway  
Held easily the victor's place, although  
A hundred fleet-limbed runners vied in sport,  
And pressed the races on the woodland course.  
Of these, a stripling, Ouma, he who once  
Had led the hunters on the Kankakee  
To where his chief was tied a prey for wolves,—  
Now grown to manhood, swift of foot ran close  
Beside Ottonoway, yet always lost,  
And showed his spleen in jealous thrusts of hate.  
He claimed adoption by the Illinois,  
And though an alien, classed himself as such.

A Winnebago won in leaping feats,  
For trained far north upon the snow to ski,  
He'd learned to dare the wildest jumps and seemed  
To skim the spaces with a panther's ease.  
The prize for skill with bow and arrow fell  
To an Ojibway chief whose flint-chipped dart  
At forty paces peeled a hazel wand,  
And who with second shaft cut clean the stem

Of post oak leaf set as a fluttering mark.  
In skill of wrestling bouts a Frenchman won,  
And threw all comers who were matched with him,  
For but few years before he'd learned the tricks  
Of soldiers and of sailors so that none  
Among the Indians or his countrymen,  
Could hold against the cunning of his strength.

In trials of their rifles put to test  
Ottonoway again won victory.  
From Eagle Cliff he shot across the space  
To point beside the fort where had been set  
A pole to which a walnut was attached,  
And after many guns had been discharged  
In vain attempt to hit the dangling mark  
He took his aim and sent the speeding ball  
From height to height and smote the baffling nut  
And knocked it shattered from its dizzy hold.  
In sports like these the hours wore on,  
And then to close the contests of the day  
They called the long race on the broken course  
Which lay across the bluffs toward the west.  
The runners gathered round the Sieur La Salle  
Protesting that Ottonoway should race.  
He knew the course, they claimed, and with his speed,  
No runner with him fairly could compete.  
The young chief on his part disclaimed he knew  
The course, except between the fort and Cliff,  
Where all alike might know if they but looked,  
And eager to maintain a runner's rights,

Besought in turn the privilege to race.  
La Salle gave verdict should the chieftain run  
He must give handicap a hundred yards;  
With readiness of youth, Ottonoway  
At once acceded to the rule imposed.

Then down the cliff the runners passed and went  
Along the course marked out for them,—a trail  
Of trees fresh-blazed and leading up and down  
Among the canyons and along the bluffs,  
A mile toward the west. Should runner veer  
For more than forty yards on either side  
The axe-notched trees and miss the plain marked course,  
He then would be disqualified, but all  
Within this space of four score yards was range  
Where each for self might choose the easiest path  
To reach the summit of the Eagle Cliff.  
The runners slowly moved along this trail  
And noted every feature by the way  
Where leap might count, or grasp of bush might help,  
Or level space give chance for burst of speed;  
And at the further end they ranged in line,  
Full sixty athletes from the gathered tribes,  
Clad in their breech cloths and their moccasins.  
A hundred yards behind this virile row  
Ottonoway was placed upon his mark,  
Then when from Eagle Cliff a gun was fired,  
All toed the scratch and at a rifle's shot  
Leaped forward with the flash, and so were gone  
Like deer which run before the timber wolves.



They take the stream before with nimble bound,  
They climb the bushy cliff and gain the top,  
They race along the summit's dizzy edge,  
They plunge with cat-like leaps from ledge to rock  
And reach a canyon's floor, then climb again  
The bush-grown walls by slippery paths and so  
Up, on, then sharply down again; they gain  
A lower level leading to the notch  
Behind the fort and make the last descent  
Before the final climb to Eagle Cliff;  
And all the course bears traces of the race,—  
A cast-off moccasin, a runner down,  
A broken bush upon the canyon's side,  
Or slide upon the slope where foot has slipped.  
As forward pressed the race, two led the troop,  
The Winnebago and the Illinois,  
Who in the earlier sports had shown their skill,  
And now were seeming victors of the race,  
For yards ahead they led the rushing throng  
And sped the course with ease of flying fox.

Meantime Ottonoway with runner's skill,  
Had pressed the race with strength and speed reserved;  
Soon had he gained upon the streaming throng,  
And passed the hindmost stragglers on the course,  
And steadily by twos and threes and tens  
Sped by the racers till but four remained  
Between himself and those who led the group;  
These four he passed upon the sandy slope  
Which led within the notch behind the fort,

Where as he gained this vantage spot he saw  
The Illinois run thirty yards ahead,  
The Winnebago half the space behind.  
As down the slope toward the stream he dashed,  
He like the Winnebago veered sharp south,  
And leaped the channel with an agile bound  
From edge of sharp cut rock and so across  
To equal point, and thus escaped the climb  
Of space which lost the Illinois his lead  
And forced him into place beside the chief,  
The Winnebago slightly in advance.  
And now they climb, Ottonoway knows well  
This portion of the course, and in short time  
He leaves behind the wrathful Illinois,  
And up the Cliff with nimble feet he speeds,  
The Winnebago soon he passes by,  
And gains the summit and the screeching crowd,  
And is proclaimed the victor of the day.

And as the final runners one by one  
Climb up, and panting lie upon the ground,  
La Salle among the assembled chiefs bestows  
Six rifles as the prizes for the race.  
The one Ottonoway receives is trimmed  
With mountings of the gunsmith's finest art;  
And in the glow upon the young chief's face  
And in Neonee's flush as she stands near,  
And in the scowl upon the rival's brow  
One plainly reads the age-old passions play  
In pride and love and envious jealousy.

## 4. THE CALUMET DANCE

With sunset's colors fading in the sky,  
The May night shadows gathered round the Rock,  
And denser darkness filled the canyons' depths.  
The Indian fires on Eagle Cliff's wide top  
Glowed brighter with the deepening of the night,  
And round them stirred the children and the squaws,  
And in their shadows sat the braves and chiefs,  
And here and there amid the firelit throngs,  
Was heard the booming of the hollow drum  
And sharp staccato of the rattling gourd.  
Across the sable curtained stretch of night,  
The fort, aglow with myriad tallow dips,  
Shone like a flaming lighthouse on the Rock;  
The entrance gates stood wide, the slopes were lit  
By flaring pine-knots set among the trees;  
A double guard was placed above the stairs  
And strong reserves stood by in reach of arms,  
For though the festive functions of the day  
Bode happily for future peace and weal,  
La Salle well knew that vigilance must mark  
Each step of enterprise among the tribes,  
Lest at some point unguarded all might fail;  
So here while gracious hospitality  
Kept open house, the eye was on the watch.

Meantime as night wrapped shadows round the Rock,  
The springs of action moved on Eagle Cliff,  
Among the swarthy circles round the fires,



Where old men told the tales of councils when  
Grave treaties by the tribes were ratified,  
And in the ceaseless throbbing of the drums,  
One common impulse seemed to rise and spread  
Until the whole assembly thrilled to it,  
And gave it voice as thus a great chief spoke:  
"My brothers, let us take the calumet  
And go upon the Rock, and with the dance  
Give Sieur La Salle the pledge of our good faith."  
At once along the bluff and through the wood,  
The thrill of purpose stirred the throng to life,  
And rising from their seats upon the ground,  
And gathering round their leaders in the glare  
Of camp-fires and the flaring knots of pine,  
The whole vast company began to form  
In wild procession to the beat of drums,  
And rhythmic rattle of their dancing gourds.  
They wound about the summit of the bluff,  
With heavy chant and deep-toned chorusing,  
Which timed itself to throbbing of the drums  
And thumpings of the pebbles in the gourds;  
Then at the edge with frantic yells and leaps,  
They bounded down the steep and dangerous paths  
With seeming recklessness of life and limb.  
And yet this mighty human cataract  
Poured down the wild and rugged canyon wall  
Without the breaking of a bone. In glare  
Of burning brands and flaming knots of pine,  
The horde flowed to the base and leaped the stream,  
Then with the rhythmic chant resumed again,

They swarmed along the sandy upward trail  
And clambered up the stairway of the Rock,  
And crowded through the gateway of the fort,  
Where Sieur La Salle in regal raiment garbed,  
With his associates a welcome waved,  
And waited for the issue of their act.

First as the throng assembled on the Rock,  
A chief unrolled and spread a rush-wove mat,  
Another on this laid a beaver robe,  
And on it others placed their manitous.  
Then next they spread about their warrior arms,  
As though to form a trophy with their bows  
And arrows, quivers, hatchets, clubs and guns,  
And in the centre of this tribal gear,  
With reverent hand they laid the calumet,—  
A red stone pipe cut from the plastic vein  
In distant quarry by Superior's shore,  
And furnished with a stem of straight-grown ash,  
From which there hung long tufts of ebon hair,  
And feathers of the eagle and the owl.  
And as each sachem filed to take his seat  
He gave his tribal god revered address,  
And stooped to lift the sacred pipe, and danced  
With graceful sway while holding it aloft  
And blowing forth the smoke in fleecy clouds.  
So passed the lengthy file of chiefs and sat,  
While warriors ranged behind, and all the space  
Became a hive of animated life  
In which were mingled squaws and screeching boys.

Now from the circle of the chiefs there rose  
One perfect as Apollo in physique,  
And passing to the mat he took the pipe  
And raised it toward the sky as though  
He summoned all the glittering stars of night  
To witness here the pledging of their faith.  
To earth, to wood, and to the stream below,  
He reached the calumet as offering these  
To share with them the tribes' fidelity.  
All this he did to rhythmic throb of drums,  
And rattling clash of pebbles in the gourds,  
And chanted cadences of Indian voice.  
Thus gracefully the dancing chief advanced  
Around the circle, and the mouth-piece pressed  
Against the lips of brother chiefs who drew  
The smoke and blew it high in curling clouds.

Then next the dancer beckoned from the group  
A second chief who rose and from the mat  
Took bow and arrow as for fatal strife,  
And with poised dart and threatening look of hate,  
Rushed to the fray, when lo: the calumet  
Is interposed and panic claims the foe,  
And back he draws and runs in craven flight.  
Thus each advance and threat the foe may make  
Is thwarted by the magic calumet,  
Moved rhythmically to keep the time with chant  
Of deep-toned voices in the circling throng,—  
Such power lies hidden in the sacred pipe.  
At length the chorus dies to silence, then

The bearer of the calumet relates  
The list of battles he has fought afield,  
And names the places where the strife was joined,  
The tribes that waged the conflict with his own,  
What captives by his vengeful hands were bound  
And led afar from thence in servile file  
To burn at stake or till his fields of maize.

When thus he had harangued his auditors,  
A patriarchal chief unrolled a robe  
Of beaver-skins which round the dancer's form  
He threw, and bade him pass the calumet  
From hand to hand until the elder chief  
Received it once again and blew the smoke,  
Now toward the moon and now toward the earth,  
Then handed it in grave and reverent act  
To Sieur La Salle while thus he spoke and sealed  
The covenanted pact before the throng:  
"The sun has looked upon our tribes today  
As we have gathered here to seal our faith  
And pledge the loyal feeling of our hearts;  
Long as he shines above this noble Rock,  
Long as the waters lave its moss-grown base,  
Long as the moons shall follow in their file,  
And long as any remnant of our tribes  
Shall range these prairies, we will keep the faith  
Which we have plighted with you here this day;  
In testimony of this faith assured,  
We give the calumet and with it give  
Our yet most sacred treaty wampum belt."

With this he there unrolled a shell-wrought scarf,  
On which by arduous toil of skillful hands,  
Were worked the figures of an Indian chief  
And leader of the French joined hand in hand,  
In token of a lasting brotherhood  
Resolved to keep inviolate their pledge.

To him La Salle replied in happy terms:  
"Right glad are we to here confirm this pact  
By which the tribes are leagued with power of France,  
And on our part we covenant to keep  
The faith as brothers in one family born.  
This fort, these guns, our valiant soldiery,  
And all that might of arms can hold secure,  
We pledge in here maintaining your defense.  
The traffic needful for the tribes' supply  
We will protect at any cost, and send  
Among your camps the teachers of the Word  
Who shall declare to you the way of life.  
The seal of faith we set upon our pledge,  
Confirming it with gift of gun and gear."

Then to each chief some token of good-will  
He gave with hand so free and generous  
His store of kettles, hatchets, pistols, guns,  
And other ware was well-nigh made deplete;  
But by his gifts he larger favor won,  
And long the chiefs and sachems on the Rock  
Sat smoking as they counceled how they might  
Confirm and strengthen from the Lakes to Gulf

The terms of covenant they made that day.  
Still further feasting followed on the Rock,  
And then in gladsome dance the chanting throng  
Surged down the stairway to the level plain,  
Where fiercer and more savage revels ran  
Their race with passing hours in wild excess  
Of rude barbaric joy. The Indians leaped  
And yelled and rolled upon the sandy soil,  
And tossed their tomahawks in whirling flight  
And caught them with deft hand on their return.  
One incident alone that boisterous night  
Bore augury of ill,—a weapon thrown  
From out the surging crowd against the tree  
Where stood Neonee and Ottonoway,  
To watch, removed, the orgy's wild carouse.  
Yet by what hand the tomahawk was thrown,  
And for what purpose none might then divine,  
But had a close observer seen the glint  
Which shot through fierce Monongonee's drawn lids,  
Or glimpsed the furtive smile on Ouma's face,  
He might have sensed the plottings of a crime  
And trailed the craven act to felon source.

## BOOK V.

### 1. THE DEEPENING OF THE SPRING

As springtime's season lengthens into June  
The forest verdure shifts to deeper green,  
The maizefields stir with newly planted life,  
The river mirrors all the lovely forms  
That droop in gracefulness along her shores;  
The black bass leap above the silvery flood  
In ecstasy of life's abounding joy,  
And kindly nature smiles upon the scene  
Atoning for her wintry cruelties.  
The violets in sunny nooks long since  
Have dropped their faded hoods in graves of green.  
The ferns in mossy beds unroll their fronds  
Like hairy little fledglings half awake.  
The thrush's song, the robin's roundelay,  
The flicker's rolling note, the dove's low moan,  
Make minstrelsy as in enchanted land,  
And bluffs re-echo to the calls of love.  
The mallard's mate from noisy flock retired,  
Has built her down-lined nest among the reeds  
And hatched her brood of fluffy young, and led  
Her nimble charges to their feeding grounds.  
The bison calves now frisk about their dams  
In sportive play upon the rolling lands,  
And with the dawn of each June day there breaks



The hollow booming of the prairie cock,  
And bird-songs from the woodland fill the hours,  
And float across the plains and down the vales;  
And when the deepening season's balmy night  
Drops silently her shrouding curtain folds,  
A mellow music through the darkness drifts  
With subtle sweetness of a pleasant dream,—  
The fall of waters tinkling in the glens,  
The kildee calling in his vagrant flight,  
The brown owl trilling soft his song of love,  
The red-fox answering to his barking mate,  
And moonlight flooding all the land with gold.

On night like this La Salle upon the Rock  
Beside the strongwalled fort dreams as he stands  
And drinks the beauty of the moonlight scene.  
He sees the vision of his enterprise  
Take form and substance as a dream made real,—  
Vast fleets of elm canoe sweep to the Rock,  
And cargoes of rich peltries are discharged;  
New convoys here make up and pass down stream  
To gather other stores along their route,  
And voyage on to France from Colbert's mouth.  
He sees the line of growing Empire stretched  
From Anticosti, up the river's length,  
By way of wild Niagara, the Lakes,  
This Rock, Prudhomme, the Fort upon the Gulf,—  
And wealth and fame and power, the triple crown  
Which he would place upon his nation's brow.  
But even as he dreams the vision fades,

The moon is quickly overcast by clouds,  
A storm sweeps suddenly across the sky  
And dims the stellar lights with dark and rain.

## 2. THE CANYON OF THE DEER

Ottonoway by Arimoni's flood  
Sat resting from the chase; June crowned the hills  
With richest flowers and densest foliage.  
From hidden seat he could observe each way  
The river in approach and onward flow.  
The stream was running high from copious rains  
Which for three days and nights had drenched the  
    plains  
Around the source, and now the tawny tide  
Was roaring down its channel's tortuous course.  
Beneath his tree the scout looked on the flood,  
And on the moment was aware a craft  
Was laboring against the rushing tide,  
And slowly urged along the further shore  
By two strong Indians,—one Monongonee,  
The other, Ouma, his young satellite.  
Almost upon the instant down the stream  
A barge with seven braves shot into view,  
And closing with the other passed from sight  
Against the northern bank as though the hill  
Had swallowed them a stone's throw from his seat.

The hunter knew the place; that here the way  
Led back within a canyon where the floor

Was surfaced by the Arimoni's flood,  
And in the entrance there on either hand,  
One from his craft at rest might almost touch  
The sharp-cut walls with his short paddles tip.  
The only spot for landing in such time  
Within the flooded glen, a cave-like shelf,  
Where at the canon's head the waters swirled  
Around a glittering cascade's foaming base,  
And cut among the rocks a giant bowl,  
Made, so tradition said, for Manitou.  
Here to this canyon when the floor was drained,  
The circling Indians drove the panting deer  
And slaughtered there the herd. Now on its flood  
Monongonee led in his visitors,  
And one might know the act presaged some plot  
As dark and wild as was the cavern's stream.  
The laboring craft were stayed beside the shelf  
Which spread far back beneath the crumbling rock,  
And here Monongonee with careful foot  
Stepped lightly to the slippery landing-place  
And motioned with impatient hand his guests  
To seats upon the rocky cavern floor,  
Then scowling darkly said, "What madness this  
Which sends the birch-bark message to my hut,  
And bids me meet you here? Do you not know  
A watchful panther crouches on the Rock?  
La Salle, no squaw-chief with a heart of crow,  
Defends the Illinois and kindered tribes,  
And coming now to such a place as this  
It is to bolt within the wild beast's lair."





UPON A ROLL OF PAPER HE SKETCHED A MAP



To him the leader of the band replied,  
"What danger here? Disguised as Kickapoos,  
We pass unchallenged down this treacherous stream,  
We here confer an hour, and then are gone  
Like morning mists from off the meadow's breast,  
And who is wiser for our fleeting stay?  
Besides our chief has bade us test this stream,  
And see if we may lead our bands by it  
When with the coming of the autumn frosts,  
We plan again to spoil the Illinois.  
From you we are to learn conditions here,  
How best to make attack, then hastening home,  
Report and guide our warriors to the fray."

Monongonee, appeased, sat for the hour  
And told the spies what late events transpired  
Upon the Rock and in the Indian town;  
How distant tribes were moving to the place  
And building wigwams 'neath the sheltering guns.  
Upon a roll of bark he sketched a map  
To show where guides should meet the Iroquois,  
How time their fleet to sail the Illinois,  
Where leave the river for the valley trail,  
What paths to take, what ambuscades to set,  
Where best to make attack upon the fort,  
How strike Kaskaskia at the sunset hour  
And drive the panic-stricken natives west,  
And then returning, sack the captured fort,  
And leave the Rock with smoking ruin crowned.

Meantime Ottonoway passed down the shore  
And found his boat and crossed the raging stream,  
And climbed the steep, and on the dizzy edge  
Looked down upon the canyon's seething flood.  
He saw the craft below and guessed some plot  
Were being hatched upon the shelf beneath,  
But search as best he might he found no spot  
Where he could see the group in council met,  
And so, impatient, waited through the hour  
And saw at length the company depart,  
Mistrusting that the braves were Iroquois.  
Once on the Arimoni's boiling flood,  
Monongonee's canoe sped down the stream,  
The spies crossed over and in single file  
Passed quickly to the prairies of the south,  
And evening found them many miles removed.

Ottonoway told Sieur La Salle that day  
What he had seen by Arimoni's stream  
And in the flooded Canyon of the Deer,  
And how he thought the visitors were spies,  
But could not bring the proof beyond the fact  
He'd found a dart-head of peculiar type  
Upon the cave-like shelf within the glen  
Where sat the braves with fierce Monongonee.  
La Salle gave answer thus to his grave guide:  
" 'Tis not in reason spies should come so near,  
Besides our hunters bring no word of foe  
On plain, in wood, or by the water ways.  
They're only friends of wild Monongonee



Who visit him to plan a hunting trip,  
Or autumn journey to some neighboring tribe.  
However, it is strange that they should come  
By such a route and meet in such a spot.  
It may be well to watch that wary wolf,  
Who keeps La Vantum in disturbed foment,  
And send him on an errand to Crevecour  
To help Jacques D'Autray bring the anvil here  
We're needing for the gunsmith's forge and shop."

And so it was in false security  
La Salle awaited issues, blind to signs  
Which threatened overthrow to cherished plans,  
And watched in vain for coming of supplies  
Long overdue and needed in the fort.

### 3. NEONEE

Neonee in the darkness of the night  
Had fled Monongonee's rude hut in haste.  
A savage orgy through the evening hours  
Held bedlam session in the wild abode,  
And broke at length in brutal violence  
About the hapless Indian maiden's head.  
Young Ouma urged his heated suit of love  
And strove to win by force. Monongonee  
With counter craft in mind, had struck him down  
And said, "You want to cross our plans too soon."  
Then in the brawl Neonee slipped away,  
And night received her as a faithful nurse.

Couched on a mossy mound beneath an elm  
She slept that night and with the light of dawn  
Fled from the village in her birch canoe,  
And sought the odorous woods to spend the day  
Until the hut's vexed currents should subside.

She pushed her little vessel from the shore,  
And rode the waters like a fairy sprite,  
Fresh as the dawn and flashing as the dew,  
A creature lovely as the rosy morn.  
With graceful motion like the sway of limbs  
When gentle winds bestir the lacy larch,  
She moved her paddle, and with rhythmic stroke  
She drove her craft mid-current down the stream,  
Until among the willows to the west,  
She saw the Arimoni's silvery lane  
Lead down from rugged forest-covered hills,  
Then up its shimmering course she pushed her barque.  
Oftimes she quit the stream and climbed the slopes,  
Or silent sat among the shadowy rocks  
To watch the playful sports of silvan life.  
The squirrel, surprised to find her there, gave vent  
To ruffled feelings with his scolding bark,  
Until he heard her answering call, then came  
And frisked upon the log before her seat.

A mother grouse led by her furry brood,  
And when almost against Neonee's foot,  
She saw the maiden's form and gave alarm  
And as by magic disappeared her flock,—

The only tell-tale token of their fright  
Was one wee head which peeped from 'neath a leaf.  
The hen with swift wing whirred away in flight,  
But soon stole back and seeing nought to fright  
She gave soft call to claim again her chicks.

Deep in the wood, the maid with noiseless tread,  
Stole shadow-like upon a spotted fawn  
Which lay as still as were the ashen leaves  
And branches of the broken tree 'mongst which  
It couched and blended with the forest's floor.  
And yet it stirred not though she stood so close  
That with her hand she might have touched its ear.  
Amongst the rushy pools beside the stream  
She saw a wary wild-duck with her brood  
In morning quest of snails and polliwogs.  
And one time with a broken branch she drew  
An overhanging limb to her canoe,  
And saw within a lichen-covered nest  
Two tiny milk-white eggs of humming bird,  
While round the sycamore in rapid flight  
The anxious ruby-throated builders flashed.

Thus up the Arimoni passed the maid,  
And by the river's marge and on the slopes,  
Found never-ending wonders of the wild,—  
Soft floors of luscious moss where fairy hordes  
Might hold high carnival on moonlit nights;  
Rank liverwort whose waves of blue and green  
Splash spumelike up the beetling walls of cliff;

Wide beds of fern and bracken where the fox,  
A wary Robin Hood, creeps stealthily,  
And preys on life less skilled in craft than he.  
Here climbing over massive walls of rock  
Warped by the agony of hidden fires  
Long ages since, and there again where streams  
With chiselling force had carved fantastic forms,  
And in the deeper mazes of the wood  
In burrow, nest, and covert nook she found  
The secret treasures of the forest folk.  
And ever as she moved among their haunts,  
She echoed back in perfect mimicry,  
The cry and call of every vagrant bird.

So through the morning hours she passed up stream,  
And ranged through many a shadowy flower-lit glen,  
And came at length upon a water fall  
Where broken cliffs lay heaped in shattered ranks.  
Here baby rainbows played among the mists,  
And wreathed the bowlders with their roseate bands,  
While laughter rippled through the rushing flow,  
And mournful spirits of the dead tribes sang  
Their requiem in tuneful monotone.  
A little space apart Neonee sought  
A mossy seat beneath a thick-leaved beech,  
Where she might watch unseen the path and stream,  
And hear the droning of the waterfall,  
And dream among the shadows of the wood.

The past rose pageant-like before her eyes,  
And in a wigwam by a brawling stream  
She saw herself, an Indian child, first note  
The scenes that wrote themselves in memory.  
Around her home the other wigwams stood,  
And stretching over mountains and rough hills,  
Vast, lonely, dripping wastes of solitude.  
And through these scenes Monongonee, then young,  
Stalked like a fiend on evil errand bent,  
His lodge more turbulent than was the stream  
That raged outside. She fled his cruel blows  
And spent the hours in ranging through the wood,  
And learning secrets from the creatures there,  
And luring them to her with mimic cries,—  
The love call of the moose, the bleat of fawn,  
The bark of reynard and the chirp of squirrel.  
The veery answered her with silvery call,  
The blackbird left his willow perch to learn  
What mate with sweeter note piped in reply,  
And like a golden flute the hermit-thrush  
Let fall his answering song at eventide.

Upon her seat beneath the beechen tent,  
Her waking vision saw the unhappy train  
Of scenes of vice and wretched cruelty,  
The ragings of the fierce Monongonee,  
His fits of temper and his brutal blows,  
The lodge's stream of wild pernicious deeds,  
Through all of which she'd been preserved unscathed.  
Before her passed her lovers in review,

Unwelcome, unrewarded in their suits;  
And most disliked, Monongonee's young brave,  
Who with him kept the camp in wild tumult,  
And ever urged his quest with zeal and heat.

Amongst these figures of her mental train,  
One rose in manlier form, Ottonoway,—  
The thought of whom encouraged happier mood,  
For with the passing of the months, their love  
Had ripened for the nuptial day to dawn  
When *Sieur La Salle* should so arrange his plans  
To give the hunter guide his pledged release.  
In fancy now she saw him as her eyes  
Beheld him first in camp below the Rock,  
Where with *La Salle* he stood upon the shore,  
When with the squaw she'd brought Chief *Mogree's*  
gift.

She saw him as he climbed the Eagle Cliff,  
A victor in the great race of the day  
The fort was opened when he'd won the prize.  
And saw him, too, as none else had, as oft  
They'd met at trysting places in the wood.

And now as though her dream to substance changed  
She looked along the path beyond her seat,  
And there among the shadows of the trail,  
She saw her lover pass below the rocks,  
And on the instant saw him pause alert,  
As broke the sobbing of a whippoorwill  
Upon the stillness of the afternoon.

A moment more, a great owl's booming note  
Is heard above the roaring waterfall,  
And soon the seat beneath the screening boughs  
Has been discovered by the observant chief,  
And he has reached the Indian maiden's side.  
The few brief hours till June's fair day is done  
Speed by, and down the Arimoni's course,  
On moonlight's silvery trail, Ottonoway  
Guides carefully Neonee's fragile barque,  
And rounding on the mother stream they move  
Against the current to Kaskaskia's door.

#### 4. AS FLIES THE CROW

Time in La Vantum wearied on his march,  
And bivouaced in the midst of tedious days,  
And listless sat upon the river bank,  
And watched the sluggish Illinois glide by  
While August dyed the land with drab and gray.  
The squaws awoke at morn and built their fires,  
And fed their surly overlords who lounged  
In shady spots or scattered to the wood;  
The women wandered wide in search of food,  
And day wore on unbroken by a sound,  
Except perchance a shout, or wolf cub's snarl  
Provoked by baiting thrusts of Indian lads.  
Then with the waning of the afternoon,  
The gleaning squaws returned, refreshed their fires,  
Prepared the game and fish their lords brought in,  
And so performed their tiresome round of tasks.



Whilst thus the town pursued its usual course,  
Neonee and Ottonoway, one eve,  
Far from the village strayed upon the bluffs,  
And came to Horse Shoe Canyon's rim and sat  
An hour above the western gorge and talked  
Of matters pleasing to their lover's mood.  
A crow tamed by the maid accompanied them,  
And with odd antics added to their sport.  
Their talk in part was of the lodge and fort,  
And plans for future prospects when the guide  
Should be recalled to Canada and take  
Neonee as his bride to far Quebec.  
"Now what if I should put you to the test  
And go not lest you won another race?"  
Neonee said. "Suppose I pitted you  
Against my bright-winged crow and made the terms,  
And only went if you should win the race."  
She forward leaned and looked far down beneath,  
Where eighty feet below the rope-like vines  
Began their tortuous climb to trees above,  
Then turning to Ottonoway she said,  
"Suppose that you were down there in the glen,  
And I with Master Crow were sitting here,  
And I should bid you come to me before  
My bird should fly the half leaigue to the fort,  
And then return, and you failed first to win,  
And I refused to go to old Quebec,  
What then? These losers make such sorry mates  
We maidens do not wish their company."

Thus challenged, forward bent Ottonoway  
And studied long the glen and rocky wall,  
The rope-like vines and ledges on the cliff,  
Then in his turn he smiled at her and said,  
"I do not lose: for see that vine far down  
Beside the rock which guards yon shining pool,  
I take my stand there with my hunter's knife;  
Now start your bird, I simply cut my vine  
And climb the rock and as I reach its top,  
Your crow is at the lonely Witch's Cave.  
With my free vine I swing across yon space  
To that high ledge where ferns and woodbine grow;  
Your pet is flying over Wildcat Canyon now;  
I creep along the ferny shelf until I reach  
That second vine you see beside the bush,  
And as I cut it, round the Devil's Nose  
Your tame bird flies to circle o'er the fort.  
I swing once more, this time across the glen,  
And drop among the bushes where I point.  
Your crow has scarcely reached the Eagle Cliff  
On his return when I am climbing up  
By bush and limb the intervening space.  
And while the Bee-hive Mound he has just passed,  
Before his shadow falls on Pulpit Rock,  
I've scrambled up and reached your seat and won,  
And now claim hand and pledge and lover's right."  
With this he kissed the Indian maiden's lips  
And sat with her in lover's close embrace,  
And watched the evening colors shift and fade  
Upon the canyon's rugged fern-draped walls.

Although Neonee was in mind assured  
Her lover might accomplish as he said,  
Still seeming unconvinced she made reply,  
"Ah well, it's far away to old Quebec!  
Your vine may break and you come tumbling down,  
And Master Crow and I be left to wail."

Meantime the bird had ranged at happy will,  
And now sat scolding on a black-oak bough  
Short distance to the rear. A fallen tree  
With tangled mass reclined below his perch,  
And here from limb to limb he nimbly hopped,  
And fretted with impatient piercing cries,  
As though a crafty fox or stealthy lynx  
Were hiding in the broken mass of limbs.  
The lovers quickly noting this advanced,  
When Ouma rose amongst the prostrate boughs,  
And stole away shamefaced yet hot with rage.  
"I hate that sneaking wolf," Neonee said,  
"He's stalked us here to spy upon our plans,  
And if he only dared would do us harm."  
Ottonoway made no reply, but watched  
His rival disappear among the trees.  
But when before the week had run its course  
The hapless crow was found, a ruffled mass,  
Its head wrung from its neck, beside a path  
Close by La Vantum, both the lovers knew  
The deed was Ouma's, though no proof was found.

## BOOK VI.

### 1. THE AUGUST BLIGHT

How fades the freshness of the springtime growth  
In field and grove and by the dried up streams,  
As though the furnace glow of summer's heat  
Had scorched the living green to faded brown.  
The plastic forms of April's budding art,  
The sheen and vigor of the leaf and shoot,  
The masses of upspringing shrub and plant,  
Absorb the lassitude of passing days  
And weary of their beauty, grace, and strength,  
They droop bedraggled, dull, and token death.  
The mantling ivy, climbing o'er the cliff,  
The early sign of autumn color shows;  
The maples in the dried and fissured swamps  
Their inner leaves be-dye with crimson hue.  
The forest's undergrowth which struggled long  
Against the oppression of its loftier kind,  
Resigns to nature's slow and blighting grip.  
Dull browns and withered grays with mocking hues  
Of coming death now fill the landscape where  
A few short months before the healthy green  
Of vigorous life was showing everywhere.

The river islands frowzy with their growth  
Of reeds and rushes, ragweed, dock and cress,

Have lost their Maytime freshness, and repose  
Like weary beggars sprawling in the sun,  
Unkempt, forlorn and dressed in faded brown.  
The canyons now are silent haunts of gloom,  
Where rocks in naked ugliness are strown;  
No grateful streamlet murmurs on its course,  
And plant leaves shrivel on the thin-soiled shelves.  
Nor less the languor on the sultry plain,  
Where drouth has bleached the grass, and placed her  
    seal

On faded flowers and stalks of sturdy weeds  
Which lift their leaden heads above the sward  
And pale with sicklier hue beneath the sun.  
The dewless night lets down her sable pall  
And covers heated plain and withering wood,  
And hot winds stir and sigh amid the grass.  
The bison snorts and rolls his anxious eye  
And sniffs afar the coming prairie fire.  
Then as the red tide sweeps the tindery plain,  
It drives before its hot and billowy surge  
The hapless creatures of the grazing lands,  
And only halts along the timbered streams.

## 2. LA SALLE'S LAMENT

The half spent August afternoon was on,  
The sunlight shimmered on the Illinois,  
And glinted on the sea of leafy green  
Around St. Louis on its castled Rock.  
No note of bird nor call of waterfowl

Was heard in forest or along the stream;  
The blazing heat and deep intensity  
Of silence brooded over everything.  
The sentinel upon his watch half drowsed,  
And looked with sleepy eyes upon the group  
Of trappers sprawled within the grateful shade  
Of pine and oak which on the summit grew.

Within the shadow of the fort apart,  
The Sieur La Salle with faithful Tonti sat  
And thus communed upon his plans and work:  
"Do you recall," said he, "the promise shown  
In this fair enterprise when we began?  
The scattered tribes convened at Council Cave  
From ranges full two hundred miles away,  
Along the Mississippi and Des Moines,  
And from Ohio's tributaries south,  
And from the sources of the Kankakee.  
Remember you that morning when the tribes  
Came down the Illinois and from the west?  
The stream was all alive with water craft,  
And bands came in across the plains as well.  
Remember how they drove their tests on us,  
And we replied, "Our Father over seas  
Has sent us here with tokens of regard  
And pledges of undying loyalty.  
But form this stanch confederacy with us  
And we will build a fort on this high Rock  
Where all may stand against the Iroquois.  
Remember, too, how when the fort was reared,

And France's banner waved above its roof,  
We called again the tribes to celebrate,  
And gave assurances anew to them  
That we would here protect their homes and fields.  
And see with what implicit confidence  
They've rested on our word."

He flung his hand,  
And claimed the valley with his gestured sweep,  
And Tonti, following with his gaze, looked down  
Upon the Indian huts and fields of corn,  
A paradise of plenty in the wild.  
Around the clearing's edges might be seen  
The lodges woven from the rushes' growth,  
The cabins built from bark, and further west,  
The sunlight falling on the village roofs.

Then Sieur La Salle resumed: "See how they've come,  
Miamis, Weas, Ottawas, and all,—  
Full twenty thousand souls; and we perch here  
Upon this Rock like helpless birds; our fort  
Strong only in its name and natural site;  
One breath of animated power against  
Its gates, and all our work comes crashing down;  
Less than a hundred pounds of powder now  
Within our magazines; our goods all spent,  
Our fleets delayed and held beyond the Lakes;  
My credit undermined by crafty foes,  
Designing spies at work among us here,  
The Church suspicious of our every move,



And New France blind to her own best concern.  
What hope is there? O Tonti, could you know  
The cruel crushing of one's lifetime plans!  
I would have builded here for France and King  
An Empire vaster than the motherland,  
But Canada is full of jealousy,  
And merchant, priest, and Governor combine  
To throttle every promising device.  
We may as well write Ichabod aloft  
Upon the banner of our fort, unless  
Some power unseen give aid to our designs.  
The withering blight of summer's blazing heat  
Has sapped the springtime verdure of our plans,  
And all is ready for devouring fires."

Throughout the hours of afternoon and eve  
The men reviewed their plans upon the Rock,  
And Tonti well performed the role of friend,  
But strove in vain to lift depression's shade,  
For deeply overcast by clouds of fate,  
La Salle's heroic nature might not stand  
Unmoved the onslaughts of base treacheries,  
And hopes delayed make kingliest hearts grow sick.  
But as the evening hours advanced there came  
At length another actor on the scene,  
Who nerved the Man of Iron for new tasks.  
For while the moonbeams fell on Eagle Cliff,  
And flooded it with soft transforming light,  
Somewhere from 'mongst its shadows spake a voice,  
As though an Indian prophet long repressed,

And courting safety in an unknown tongue,  
In general terms and veiled speech gave vent  
To hate, revenge, and plot of overthrow.  
The message falling on the silent night  
In accents vibrant with the speaker's mood  
Was this:

“Proud Fort upon thy boasted Rock,  
The tide will rise and climb and beat thee down,  
And bear thy ruin on its raging breast.  
The tide will rise and spread and fill the vale  
With panic, battle, blood, and torture fires.  
Before the snows shall fall and winter come,  
The tide will rise, the tide will rise.”

It ceased,  
And Sieur La Salle to Tonti turned and said,  
“Know you that tongue? I learned it years ago,  
While ranging far beyond the Ohio's flow.  
It is the Tuscarora dialect,  
And if I guess aright, Monongonee  
Is now among the prophets, and the voice  
We heard is his. I thank him well, for now  
My course is clear: I'll cut the Gordian knot;  
Tomorrow I shall leave for Canada  
To hasten forward our delayed supplies;  
On you will rest the keeping of the fort.”

### 3. THE IROQUOIS

As through some fair and peaceful valley scene,  
A flood sweeps down from broken reservoir

And leaves behind the wreckage of its wrath,  
With fertile meadows gashed and trees uptorn,  
And rocks bestrown, and happy homes despoiled,  
And death and sorrow in its baneful wake,  
So came the fierce and wolf-like Iroquois  
To spoil the valley of the Illinois.

The harvest moon was at its full that eve;  
La Salle was gone a month; not yet arrived  
The weapons and supplies from Canada;  
And as the sun went down and moonlight shone,  
Dark figures stole along the shadowy paths,  
And unsuspected set their ambuscades.  
Ottonoway was taken on the trail,  
Returning heavy weighted from his hunt,  
And bound and gagged before a shot was fired.  
A rush was made against the fort's high gate,  
But watchful eyes and valorous hands made safe  
This vantage point, and then a cannon boomed,  
The rifles spit their sharp and vengeful fire,  
And instantly the savage war-whoop broke,  
A mile away upon the other shore,  
Around Kaskaskia's doomed and hapless huts.  
The way to safety on the Rock was blocked,  
As rushed the natives through the fields of maize  
To find protection in the wastes beyond.  
Then fire-brands flashed and mocking flames leaped up,  
And shamed the startled moon with her mild glare,  
As they devoured the huts of reed and bark,  
And fed upon the rush-mats of the lodge.

And in the brightness of these burning fires,  
The Iroquois struck down with ruthless blows  
Old men and squaws and helpless Indian babes,  
And bound the warriors captured in their flight,  
Or shot them as they fled the holocaust.  
Along the clearing's edge the fierce flames raged  
Wherever stood a Redman's hut or lodge;  
The scaffolds of the dead were overthrown,  
And skulls left grinning on the stakes and posts.

So all night long the lurid bursts of flame  
Lit up the valley and the river shore,  
And only with the morning came the calm  
When for a little time the spoilers slept,  
Then through the hours they stalked their harried prey,  
And added other prisoners to the group.  
The Fort was watched, yet feared and left alone,  
But all La Vantum's trails were dyed with blood.  
And with the coming of the night once more,  
The Iroquois drew in their skirmish lines,  
Passed by the fort well out of rifle range  
And took their captives to the torture grounds  
Before the entrance to the Horse Shoe Glen,  
A half league distant from the silent fort,  
And hidden by the intervening bluffs.

Amongst these prisoners, Ottonoway,  
Lashed firmly to a fellow captive marched,  
And well he knew his pathway led to death,  
But quailed not as he forward urged his steps,

Resolved his captors see no trace of fear.  
Throughout the hideous night and hours of day,  
He'd sat with other captives herded close  
Within a pen where bear-cubs oft were kept.  
Monongonee and Ouma sometimes came,  
And baited him with laughter and with scorn,  
And well he knew that he was in their power,  
And they in league with these inhuman wolves  
Who spoiled by fire and ruthless tomahawk.  
And oft his mind reverted to the glen  
Across the plain by Arimoni's flood,  
And knew these scenes the fruitage of the plot  
Arranged upon Deer Canyon's cavelike shelf.  
But now his dolorous march to death was on;  
The captive band was ferried o'er the stream,  
And as they climbed the bank his eye took in  
The plain of fire, the row of torture stakes,  
The wall of cliff, where, on a little way,  
He'd sat beside Neonee not long since,  
And planned their bridal trip across the Lakes.

Then broke the horrors of that cruel night  
Upon the hapless captive Indian throng,  
And through the cruel hours of agony  
The Iroquois prolonged their arts of pain,  
Till hell had given loathesome offspring birth,  
And having born her vicious progenies,  
And breathed within their nostrils breath of hate  
And rabid cruelty, at once recoiled,  
Ashamed and terrified to claim her kind.

The screaming child was flung upon the flames,  
The ravished maiden mocked and bound and burned,  
The breasts cut from the squaw with heated knives,  
The warrior's fingers crushed, his eyes gouged out,  
The flaming powder flashed upon his brain  
To wrench from him a last expiring groan.

Thus passed the hours with knife and fire at play  
To sate the savage lust of cruelty.

And when at length the fiendish Iroquois  
Have done to brutal death the captive band,  
And formed a circle for the vicious close,  
Monongonee leads in Ottonoway,  
And flings him loose before the savage throng,  
A curdling yell from half a thousand throats  
Resounds to add new terrors to the night.  
Monongonee for silence lifts his hand,  
The circle quiets while the scarred chief speaks  
To tell Ottonoway his secret hate.

"Before we kill you here to-night, know this:  
A score of years ago your tribe attacked  
The Tuscaroras in their southern home  
And broke my people's power and drove us thence.  
I found a lodgement with the Iroquois,  
And swore revenge against you and the French,  
With whom you were allied. In settlements  
Along the Richelieu and near Quebec,  
I worked my will and notched my tomahawk,  
But lost it in those northern wilds one night,  
And took a half breed baby as my toll

To cheer my weeping squaw who'd lost her child.  
You know her as Neonee, woman grown,  
But Ouma now shall claim her as his bride;  
We've brought her here to see her lover's fate.  
I with the Iroquois came west and sacked  
This town Kaskaskia, but three years ago.  
'Twas later planned that I, as spy, should come  
And watch our foes before we next returned,  
And so with wounds,—sham wounds,—I tricked the  
tribes,  
Dissembled hate against the Iroquois,  
And drew about me people of my kind,—  
How well we've worked the valley shows to-night.  
And had not Tonti guarded well his gates,  
That boasted fort had now in ashes lain.  
But we have you and my revenge is sweet,  
And heated knives and fingers crushed and split,  
Will be but child's play to the torture pains  
Which Ouma and myself will work on you."

With this the pair advanced, when suddenly,  
Upon the bluff a hundred feet above  
A figure stood, bathed in the moon's clear light,  
And Tonti's clarion voice commanded, "Stay."  
Each warrior gazed upon the moonlit form,  
Unconscious that within the shadows lay  
Twelve soldiers with their rifles cocked and primed,  
Awaiting but their leader's word to fire.  
The Indians saw but Tonti on the cliff,  
And heard him speak to them in measured terms:



"Your captive is the guide of Sieur La Salle;  
Deliver him unscathed within the hour  
Before the high gate yonder at the fort,  
Or here I pledge the power of France will yet  
Again lay low your distant towns and camps,  
As when Champaign despoiled your villages.  
Here is the challenge which I fling to you."

He threw far out above the maple tops  
The tomahawk he carried in his hand;  
It fell within the circled Indian throng  
Before the feet of wild Monongonee.  
With savage shout he picked the weapon up  
And held it where it caught the firelight's gleam,  
"It's mine," he cried, "I lost it long ago,  
But what are these rough words cut on the blade?"  
Then to the guide he said, "Read this for me."  
Ottonoway the weapon took and read,  
" 'Sui a tue' on le tuera par ca,  
He who has slain by this shall he be slain.' "  
At this Monongonee raised high his fist,  
And shook it at the figure on the rock,  
And shouted in the Tuscarora tongue,  
"Burn! kill! do what you please! I'll have revenge,  
And have it here within this circle's bound."

But even as he spoke death quickly fell,  
Ottonoway drove home the tomahawk,  
And raising it broke through the shattered ring  
With leaps as quick as spring of catamount,

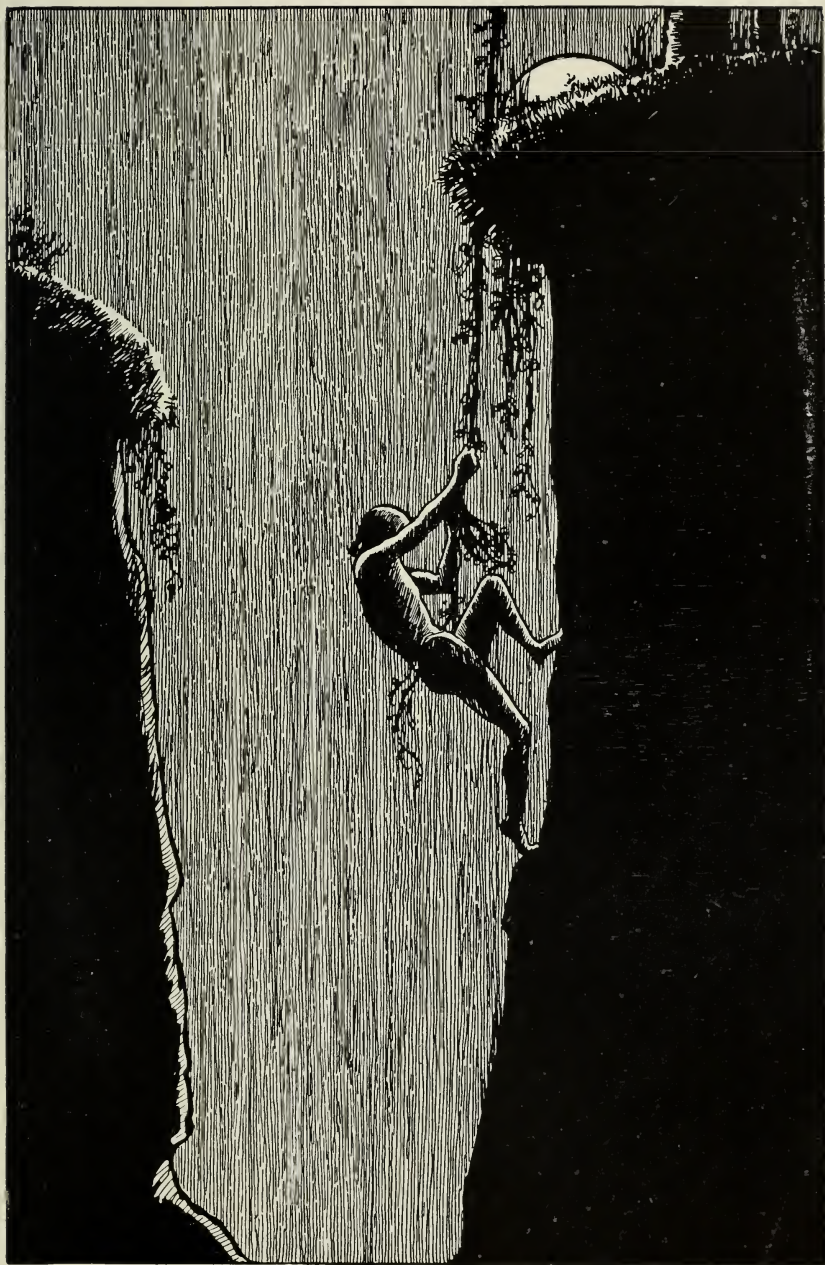
And started on a fateful race with death,  
The Indians yelling fiercely in his wake.

Run for thy life, brave hunter guide, the wolves  
Of Onondagua's forests trail thy track  
With feet well-nigh as swift as are your own.  
Run, for the massive walls of cliff will soon  
Hem in thy steps and stay thy speedy flight,  
The torturers' hands are almost gripping thee.  
With loud exultant cries the Iroquois  
Pursue, and see their victim take the path  
That leads him straight within the western glen.  
But little space ahead the moon-washed walls  
Rise sheer, forbidding, cold,—a man-trap they,  
Among the bluffs, no footholds on their sides  
Short of a ledge that runs some twenty feet  
Above the broken rock beside the pool  
Where grew the vines that climbed the cliff to find  
Their hold upon the treetops high above.  
With tomahawk upraised Ottonoway  
Turned for a second, gave the death halloo,  
Then bounded sidewise like a startled deer,  
And grasped a rope-like vine and held it fast  
The while he dealt it one quick skillful blow  
Against a sapling's trunk and cut it through.  
Then holding firm the severed end he climbed  
Upon the broken rock nearby, and swung  
Far out above the Iroquois, and up  
Until he dropped upon the ledge and crept  
Along the narrow shelf until he reached

The second vine he'd marked the month before  
When sitting with Neonee on the cliff.  
Again his weapon cleft the slender vine,  
Again he grasped and swung across the glen,  
Again he saw the forms of hate below,  
Again his feet touched safely grateful earth,  
This time the spot where love had blazed a path,  
And so he climbed by sapling, vine and limb  
To where he'd sat beside the Indian maid  
Short weeks before, there paused, looked down, and  
gave  
One curdling yell, defying foeman's hate,  
Then vanished in the shadowy, moon-laved night,  
And on the heels of Tonti reached the fort.

#### 4. THE LOVER'S LEAP

Balked of their prey the angry Iroquois  
Returned to where the fierce Monongonee  
Had met his fate. In sullen wrath they raged  
Like wolves which having lipped a quarry's blood  
Yet lost their prey another victim seek,  
And with a common instinct's lust for blood,  
Their hate sought out Neonee to be slain  
Because beloved by him who had escaped.  
But she, divining what their wrath might seek  
On their return, had in the exciting stir  
Slipped silently away by river path  
Toward the fort. The squaws had seen her leave;  
She had not gone toward the boats near by,



HE CLIMBED BY SAPLING, VINE AND LIMB



Since thus suspicion might be roused,  
But slipped within the shadows of the trees,  
As silently as does the night itself.

She heard the voices of the wood and stream  
As she gained distance from the torture scene,—  
The sobbing of the lonely whippoorwill,  
The sharp and squalling bark the she-fox gives,  
The long wail which the hoot-owl voices low,  
A loon's wild laugh amid the island's reeds,  
And once the faint far moan of timber wolf  
From distant hills across the Illinois.  
She crept among the shadows like a wraith,  
But ere half way the distance to the Fort,  
The savage Iroquois were on her trail,  
Some by the path and others in their boats.  
And from her leaf-screened trail she saw these last  
Speed by and knew that they would soon disbark  
And intercept her path. Alarmed she sought  
To change her course and reach, by longer route,  
The gateway to the fort, but found her foes  
Already in the line of her advance.  
Compelled again to take the river path,  
She stole from bush to tree with cautious steps,  
And ever in the shadow of the bluff  
Kept moving slowly toward the friendly fort.  
At length she reached the shade of Eagle Cliff,  
But dared not take the narrow course that led  
Beneath the pines which grew along the shore  
And whose dark limbs hung heavy o'er the stream.



A sense of danger warned her to a place  
Of hiding on the cliff above the pines,  
And here she crouched and watched the fort lights  
gleam,  
A bow-shot distant from her high retreat.  
Below, she heard the river's sullen flow,  
And caught the far off calls of birds of night;  
Heard, too, in valley fields the prowling beasts,  
And from the subtle sounds detected near,  
She knew her path was blocked on either side,  
And craft and cruelty were keeping guard.  
A long hour dragged its course, then from the cliff  
She gave the sobbing wail of whippoorwill,  
And somewhere from the pines around the fort  
A great owl's booming chant bestirred the night,  
Then all was still.

Meantime Ottonoway,  
Close after Tonti and his stalwart troop,  
Had reached the fort and shared their glad acclaim.  
With simple speech to D'Autray he had said,  
"Your debt is paid," and gave the tomahawk  
To him and passed outside the room to keep  
A silent vigil on the high Rock's edge,  
For he surmised his baffled foes in wrath  
Would seek to wreak their vengeance on his love.  
So waiting through the deepening stretch of night  
He read the signs of danger on the flood  
Where far below he dimly saw canoes  
Glide round the base of Eagle Cliff, and sensed



The meaning of their cunning move to trap  
The Indian maid in passage to the fort.  
He listened, like Neonee, to the sounds  
Which pierced the silence of the shadowy night,—  
The loon's wild laugh, the moan of timber-wolf,  
And, most intently, to the whippoorwill.  
Then when at length he heard the sobbing wail  
Which broke upon the ledge across the way,  
So perfect in its strain of mimicry,  
The watchers of the trail suspicioned not  
A signal in the wild bird's mornful notes,  
He knew and gave the great owl's answering call.

A moment more the sentry at the gate  
Had let him pass, and like the mist he'd gone,  
To keep again a rendezvous with death.  
This time he crept like stalking catamount  
Among the shadows, till along the shore  
Toward the west he found his birch canoe  
And launched it, then with wary noiseless dip  
Of paddle, dropped away and swung across  
To other friendly shore, and so upstream  
Until he rounds the weedy island's bound,  
And then drifts down along the southern shore,  
As though himself a trailing Iroquois.  
Beneath the pines whose heavy limbs swung dark  
Above the stream and brushed the nearby cliff  
He stayed his birchen craft, then gave again  
The long call of the owl with faultless note,  
And heard above him on the bluff's high face

Once more the wailing of the whippoorwill.  
Then through the sombre branches of the pine  
He called one word, a soft impassioned "Come."  
And hearing it, she rose from fern-draped shelf,  
Climbed down to lower ledge, but still too high  
To reach the pine top fifteen feet below;  
Here paused, until once more her lover's word  
In whispered accents bade her quickly come,  
Then poising, lightly leaped, and felt the slap  
Of branches in her face, but clutched and held,  
And with the stir of limbs Ottonoway  
Gave piercing shriek of hapless catamount  
In panther's clutch, and they who watched the trail  
Thought it a common forest tragedy.

With scarce a sound Neonee passed below,  
Swung from the pine's dark limb to love's strong arms,  
Then lowly crouching in the birch canoe,  
She saw her lover dip his paddle deft,  
And drift down stream as dawn bestreaked the sky.  
But wary eyes, with sign of coming day,  
Intently watched the paths and water way,  
And as Ottonoway from 'neath the pines  
Pushed out, a shout was raised, and dusky forms  
Came rushing from the wood to man the boats  
And intercept his passage to the fort.  
Too late: the start was his, the distance short,  
And ere his cunning foes had gained their craft  
Ottonoway had ground his light canoe  
Below the fort, and with Neonee leaped

Upon the shore and gained the lower gate.  
Then passing through they climbed the timbered stair,  
And entered by the upper door, and here  
Saw D'Autrav changing sentries on the Rock  
In readiness for duty with the dawn.  
Before the lonely poet of the wild  
The pair advanced as spoke Ottonoway:  
"I bring you home your daughter lost that night  
The great storm broke along the Richelieu."  
And looking close the poet woodsman saw  
Her mother's soul in his dear daughter's eyes,  
And drew her fondly to his beating heart,  
And lavished names of tender love on her,—  
The terms of sweet endearment breathed in French,  
The raptures to his lips so long denied.  
And as they stood united on the Rock,  
The glowing crimson deepened in the east,  
And shadowy night gave place to roseate morn.



Still flows the river at the high Rock's base,  
Still grow the forests on the stately cliffs,  
Still speak their voices from the tragic past  
To tell a race's fate,—an Empire lost.  
When night wraps stream and wood with sable robe,  
They whisper each to other 'neath the stars  
The mystic stories of the long ago,  
The stirring tales of scout and pioneer,  
The weird traditions of the races gone,  
The tragic chronicle of destiny  
Which ended on the shore of Mexico.  
Gone is the fort and gone that gallant band  
Which graced the Rock and kept the waterway,  
Gone, too, the Redman from his valley home,  
But on the extended reach of his domain,  
And in the place of visioned Empire lost,  
A mightier people build a vaster realm,—  
Which greets the sunrise of a Golden Dawn.





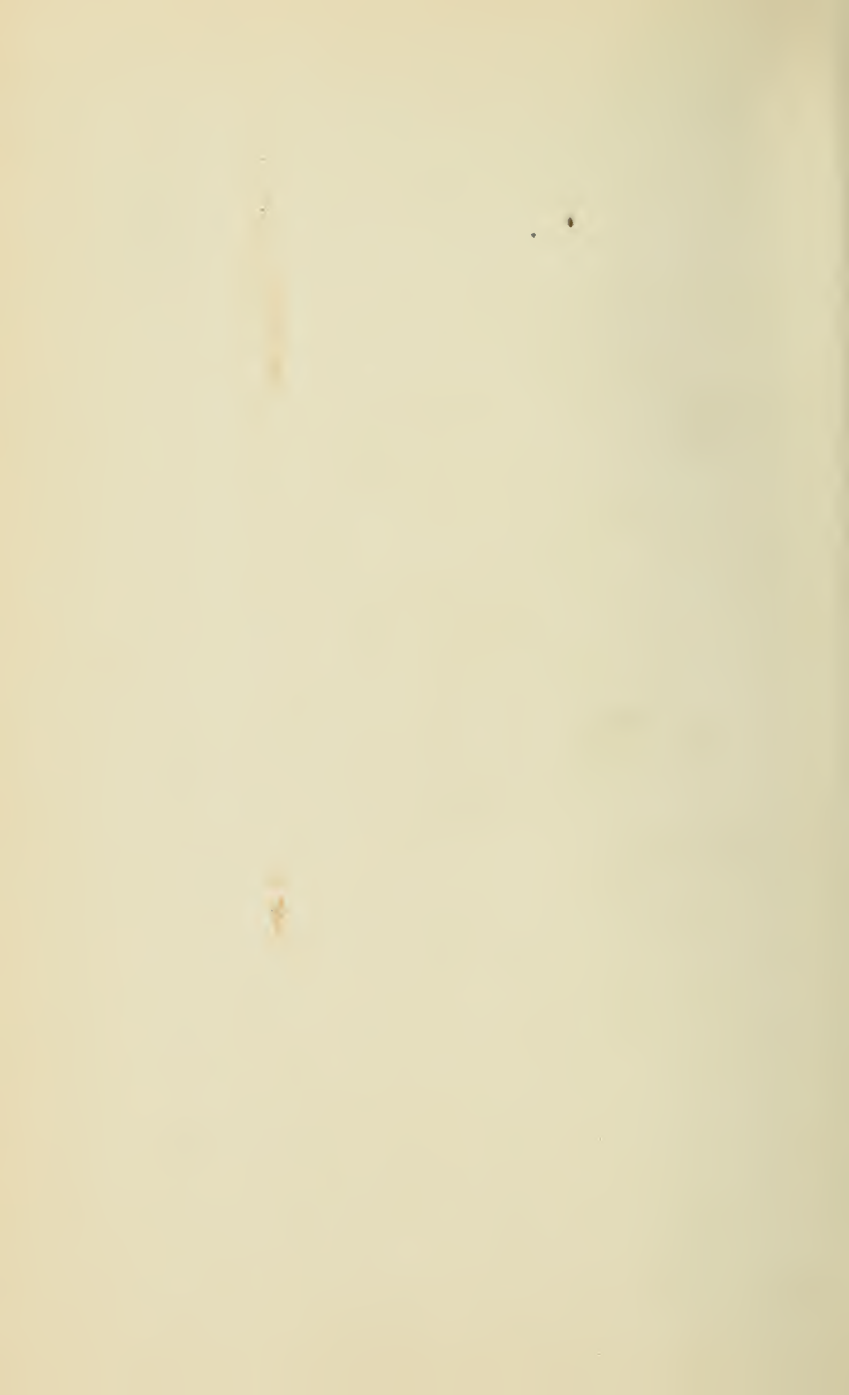




















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